Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:19 Page 1

HELLO PUDDIN'!

COMIC SCENE

Your Complete Guide to Comics

HARLEY QUINN BIRDS OF PREY

ACTION 2020

TRIGAN EMPIRE

ISSN 2517-6447

13

9 772517 644008

Comic Scene | Volume 2 Issue 12 | March 2020 | £5.99

www.getmycomics.com/ComicScene | ComicScene.org

COMIC BOOK
PRINTING SERVICES

"INCREDIBLE QUALITY, EXTREMELY USER-FRIENDLY SITE, AND UNMATCHABLE CUSTOMER SERVICE." @ETHERINGTONBROS (TWITTER)

mixam
the smart way to print

specialists in...
comics, books & zines

VISIT US AT: MIXAM.CO.UK/COMICBOOKS

Welcome to our first issue of **ComicScene** for 2020... **how exciting!**

Welcome to our new readers in Australia, Canada and the USA who can now pick up ComicScene too.

If you are a subscriber you will also get an extra digital publication from this issue - ComicScene Plus. Extra features we simply couldn't fit in the magazine and our regular Comic Creators Directory. Find out which of your favourite artists do personal commissions for your wall every issue!

Enhanced subscribers also get our 4 volume Crikey! Collected. A history of UK comics over 1000 glorious pages. Enhanced subscribers also get a mystery comic with every issue too. So what are you waiting for? **Get down to www.getmycomics.com/comicscene and subscribe today!**

Over the last couple of months we set ourselves an 80 day challenge to encourage as many comic fans to download at least one issue of ComicScene. There is still time before 29th February. We'd love to sell over 25,000 items and are donating 50p for every item purchased to the Little Heroes Charity who provide comic making kits for kids in hospital.

Your support helps us promote work across the globe, support comic creators, encourage young people to engage with comics with our outreach work, maintain our ad free web site (www.comicscene.org) and Podcast at **www.soundcloud.com/comicscene (and on Apple and Spotify).**
All from £2.50 in digital and £4.99 in print.

In this issue we feature Harley Quinn, comics history, Action, Warrior, Trigan Empire, Weird Tales, Dudley D Watkins, mental health comics, indie titles and throw in some comic strips to boot! 80 pages of comic greatness - over 140 pages with ComicScene Plus.

Next issue is out 9th April - just in time to celebrate 70 years of Dan Dare and the Eagle on 14th April. It's our Pilot of the Future Special so watch out for those flying big headed green aliens! Captain Cosmic and Lady Flintlock.

Yours aye, Tony.

Contents

4 The colours of the Rainbow
11 Rok of the Reds Part 3
20 Warrior
24 Forty Years of Doctor Who
28 Techno Freak
31 Corker Pull out Comic
40 Why I Love Comics
43 Whackoman
44 Dudley Dexter Watkins
51 Harley Quinn
52 Action 2020
56 The Trigan Empire
60 World Wide Weirdies
69 State of the Indies
76 EuroScene
78 Comics for the Apocalypse

ComicScene UK Volume 2 Issue 12 March 2020. **Copyright 2020 by ComicScene Publishing.**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be extracted and used in any other publication without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other non commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

All individual work shown remains copyright to the respective authors and artists, and all names and characters are copyright to their respective creators and companies. When copyright material has been used it has been for review purposes only.

All contributors retain the right to exploit their own material in whatever way they wish and future commercial use of said material would need agreement on their part.

ComicScene UK may not be sold in its digital form, included in a for sale CD/DVD compilation, or sold in print form unless by the publisher.

For permission requests, please write to the publisher, via email at the following address comicsceneuk@gmail.com.

All comments and opinions by the authors are their own and are not necessarily shared by the publishers.

Managing Editor: Tony Foster
Contact ComicScene UK
www.comicscene.org
comicsceneuk@gmail.com

Design: The Burgh
The Burgh Communications Ltd
www.theburgh.org
davedignan@theburgh.org

ComicScene.org
facebook.com/comicscene
twitter.com/comicscenem
Instagram.com/comicscene
comicsceneuk@gmail.com

Birds of Prey and Harley Quinn images copyright Warner Bros Movies and DC Comics.

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTIONS
comicsceneuk@gmail.com
07734 884 320

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:20 Page 4

THE COLOURS OF THE RAINBOW

The Seventies often get a bad press, yet recent revivals from DC Thomson and Rebellion's new slate of one-off specials for 2020 suggest that, for UK comic titles at least, this truly was a golden age.

Some say the world was just a dull brown back then. The 'brown' decade, all platform shoes, faux-leather jackets, bad-taste wallpaper and Mud. Any other colour attempting to pervade 'the brown' supposedly fought a losing battle; the blood-red misshapen blob of a lava lamp swallowed up by a beige wallpaper backdrop, the flickering, garish early days of colour TV lost to drab, beige lounge curtains. Look out the window, what would you see? A crack in the sky, industrial unrest, rising inflation and long, cold winters of discontent all played out to a snarling Johnny Rotten soundtrack.

Yet for those of a certain age this all remained the realm of the 'grown-up', something you might catch on 'John Craven's Newsround' before your Mum called you for your tea. It's odd, reading all the histories, because as a kid growing up then I vividly recall the colours of the rainbow, bright and glowing. There they are now in my minds eye, spread out over the counter of the local newsagents, vivid fonts that

spelt out words conjuring up mystery, danger, excitement, thrills and laughter - Vulcan, Action, Speed and Whoopee. Bullet, Crunch, Countdown and Cor!! Misty, Tornado, TV Action and Krazy. Spiderman Comics Weekly, Doctor Who Weekly, Battle Picture Weekly. Look-In, Captain Britain, Plug and Monster Fun. Starlord, Cheeky, Jackpot, Jet…just some comic titles that made their first appearance during the decade, adding to a myriad of great titles still around after first appearing in the '60's, 50's and even earlier.

My now jaded, cynical, adult eyes often read disparaging accounts of this particular period in UK comics; of a steady decline in sales, of diminishing quality, of a moribund UK comics industry already a shadow of its former self. Another common trait is to portray this period in simplistic terms, such as the 'violent' years. Of course, such readings stem from the authors own personal nostalgic preferences for their own idyllic childhood, and perhaps what you're reading right now is no different. Yet.. rather than regress into just another 'my era was the best' diatribe, I hope what follows might simply highlight the vitality, variety and innovation of just what was up for grabs on that newsagents counter between 1970 and 1979, as reading UK comics in that supposedly grim, depressing, 'brown' period of UK history often meant you were in colourful company.

A simple case in point. Imagine we travel back in time, way way back, to the early years of that decade, to that local newsagents shop you can recall so well. Maybe you're too small to actually see up and over the newsagents counter to all those colours of the rainbow spread out, completely at the mercy of some grown-up's choice in reading matter (only fair in these pre-pocket-money days). Perhaps the name and vivid orange-on-yellow font of Valiant makes an impression at that particular grown-up. Years later my jaded, cynical adult eyes will read about this title around this time, 1971/72, and of how Valiant is already in its death throes, slowly and inexorably heading towards cancellation.

Three New Pence is exchanged, and this culturally-dying artefact is handed down to you. You know nothing of its history, who's behind it, of declining sales. These are all things for your more adult, cynical future. Here, now, you simply know that you must open it up. You're instantly drawn into the latest hotheaded histrionics of Captain Hurricane and his batman Maggot. Eager young eyes search for that particular panel where the irascible marine will inevitably lose the plot and go apeshit. Of course he obliges, he always does. You're then quickly immersed in the footballing exploits of barefoot gypsy boy-wonder Raven on the Wing, as caught up in the drama and tension of the game as onlooking manager Baldy Hagan and his daughter Jo. Something about the exquisite artwork offers up a strange sense of permanent foreboding, which only intensifies on another enthralling strip, Janus Stark. Blessed relief comes in the classroom hi-jinks of the Swots and the Blots before you're plunged into the shadowy world of Return of the Claw. Strange demonic children with blanked out eyes seem to be running amok and

"...JUST SOME COMIC TITLES THAT MADE THEIR FIRST APPEARANCE DURING THE DECADE..."

Louis Crandall really should turn invisible and hide, like, right now! It gets even better…Star Trek off the telly is in it! Something to do with that mysterious phrase 'and TV21' on the cover? Everyone knows that Star Trek is just the best thing ever! Well, apart from Doctor Who of course. And the Double Deckers. In any case, the drama, humour, the sheer vitality of this cheap piece of children's ephemera sticks with you long after you finish scanning its pages and it's only later when you're actually able to read properly that you'll discover the names of those responsible: Francisco Lopez, Leo Baxendale, Jesus Blasco, Tom Tully.

How could such a wonderful thing possibly be in its death throes? You love it. You love it with all of your heart. The following week your Mum probably buys you Pippin or Cor!! instead but that's fine, really…that's OK, as the irregular love affair with these characters just means that next time you meet you'll love 'em even more. Your young eye gets more sophisticated, beginning to recognise particular artwork, characters and situations. A familiarity, an expectation begins to form, a knowledge that the sight of some fast-becoming-familiar story logo is a gateway to a particular set of thrills; the downright spookiness of that fog-bound Victorian Janus Stark streetlamp, the madcap mayhem of the Swots and the Blots classroom. Over time other titles with instantly recognisable story logos get picked up too; seeing Shiver and Shakes' Scream Inn logo guarantees a laugh, while Face ache in Buster (capturing a particular brand of genius in one single panel) leaves the young you hovering on some strange crossroads between nervous laughter and living nightmare. Later still, that same comic never fails to produce a pure adrenaline rush whenever the wonderful Leopard from Lime Street logo heralds a new adventure.

From its very first issue, Warlord fulfils its promise to you of 'action, drama, thrills - on land, at sea, in the air'. The strips seem a step up from the other wartime tales you've seen in Victor and elsewhere. Union Jack Jackson, more than holding his own amongst tough US Marines leads the charge, but best of all is main feature Codename Warlord. Lord Peter Flint, a toff hiding behind the facade of a coward avoiding the draft, is actually Britain's top wartime secret agent. With his roster of regular returning bad guys, Flint's exploits catch hold of your imagination long enough for you to enlist as a 'Warlord Secret Agent' sending off for a membership kit containing a wallet, badge, a letter from Flint himself and the all-important 'Top Secret' agents code book that will prove useful when the inevitable war against the Germans or Japanese breaks out again. But if this new title saw the depiction war presented in more graphic, realistic terms, a new competitor more than rises to the challenge. A couple of young turks called Pat Mills and John Wagner have been honing their craft on various girls comics titles (a world you remain completely oblivious to as you wouldn't be seen anywhere near a girls comic, let alone actually buy one, even if for many girls the reverse isn't always true - thankfully this demarcation between boys and girls titles during the decade has evolved into more enlightened times where everyone can now appreciate the wondrous craft and artistry of, say, Misty). From 1975 Mills and Wagner embark on rejuvenating boys comics too. You devour Battle, especially the latest exploits of Rat Pack where Wagner's storylines seem to hover over the omnipresent threat of treachery and deceit, perfectly complimented by the grim and gritty artwork of Carlos Ezquerra. Many strips from this particular title become favourites over time; Major Easy, Johnny Red, Darkie's Mob, Charley's War…

However its the humour titles which always seem to offer the widest choice of delicacy, and the same years launch of Monster Fun offers up something truly new on the menu. Yes, there's great strips such as Martha's Monster Make-Up (more monstrous mash-ups from Ken Reid) X-Ray Specs and the rather warped but quite brilliant Creature Teacher, yet all this pales before the majestic Badtime Bedtime Books by Leo Baxendale. Before you know it, after removing the centre pages and carefully folding along those dotted lines, you've created a monster, a digest-sized slice of pure anarchy, with host Leonard Rottensocks inviting you to in to bear witness to the the latest irreverent pastiche of some much-loved classic (Dr Jackal and

"…FOR MANY REASONS ACTION WILL NOT OUTLIVE ITS RIVAL…"

Mr Snide, Robinson Gruesome, Trouser Island). All shackles off, revelling in the extra space the unusual format provides, Leo Baxendale simply runs riot, every single one of his Badtime Bedtime Books bursting at the seams with a wild abandon. Your eyes scan each and every panel, trying to soak up every detail yet, eager to find out just what the hell happens next, you inevitably miss some detail on the first pass,. A second reading always picks up something new, to the point that it

sometimes seems that things might not end up the same as the last time. The only thing that's certain here, even then, is that a master craftsman is treating you to something rather special.

DC Thomson follow up Warlord's success in February 1976 with Bullet, utilising the same formula without the wartime focus. If a strip such as Three Men in a Jeep might easily slot into Warlord others such as Smasher and Vic's Vengeance share the more generic 'action stories, fast and furious' focus. The main draw delivers on exactly that; Fireball is an all-out high-kicking, karate-chopping action-hero, fighting his way from one assignment to to the next ('mysteries solved, problems licked, crooks straightened out… but only tough jobs accepted') whilst still leaving time to make it to the next big saloon car race meeting. The high-octane thrills and frills are just as engaging as Flints wartime exploits and similarly taking centre stage with up to nine full pages. A family connection even becomes apparent over time; it turns out our new moustachioed action hero is actually Flint's nephew (the first tentative moves of a DC Thomson 'action' universe?) and, just like Uncle, the new guy warrants his own 'club'. You duly send off for your 'Fireball Club' wallet, pendant and booklet (which will explain the 'secrets of Fireball' himself) and whilst patiently waiting you memorise the survival tips given away in the second issue ('packed with facts which could save YOUR life - In attack, fire, at sea, in the great outdoors'). You're convinced all these top tips will prove useful one day, even if the invitation to follow the great man himself for a 'punch up in Paris' never seemed appealing even back then.

Fireball's look was apparently based the television actor Peter Wyngarde, yet even now the world was steadily turning less Jason King and more Sweeney, less 'Glam' and more 'Punk'. In the world of UK comics Mills and Wagner are well in situ, pushing for a change already becoming inherent in music, fashion, films and television. The coming milieu will prove to be controversial for many.

Ah yes, Action. The Enfant Terrible of the UK comics industry. The unruly kid sat at the back of the class that everyone tries avoiding at lunchtimes. Also launched in February 1976 (and immediately competing with Bullet for the affections of the nations youth) the only thing the two new titles have in common is that they're both made of paper.

For many reasons Action will not outlive its rival, but its legacy and impact will far outlast the small matter of cancellation. Shooting stars often burn the brightest before they fizzle out and die, and this particular shooting star cast a huge light over the remaining years of the decade and beyond. It's the one title which (predominantly if not exclusively) gives rise to the subsequent lazy readings of this decade as merely 'violent'. Action bravely stretched boundaries at times (is this the first time a black man gets depicted as the main hero in a British comic adventure strip?) and tested waters (perhaps inadvisable with killer shark Hook Jaw around) but whether through the street anarchy of Kids Rule OK, the thuggish violence of Dredger or the mirroring of life on the football terraces in Look Out for Lefty, kids lapped it all up for a reason; it seemed real, and the red blood wash from Hook Jaw's latest kill on the colour centre pages only made it seem more so. Whether the title went out of its way to offend or was merely capturing the zeitgeist (which in some ways amounted to the same thing) is up for discussion, but with increasing sales (yes, increasing sales - in the 1970's!) the grown ups began to take notice.

As with the forthcoming furore surrounding the burgeoning punk rock movement (and as in the past with 'rock and roll' music, EC Horror Comics, the publication of 'Lady Chatterley's Lover', underground magazine 'Oz', Kubrick's 'Clockwork Orange'… add your own later examples) a pontificating mainstream media, as ever after increasing sales, claimed the moral high ground, became duly 'outraged', and sought to destroy the new 'evil' in our midst.

For you the new evil in our midst is simply a great comic that you occasionally buy. You really like the Hook Jaw transfer free with the second issue, and a large number

of friends and other kids from school seem to have at least a passing familiarity with the title. Then blissfully unaware of any adult furore, my own jaded, cynical adult self now has become only too aware of it, and (not having witnessed the original broadcast) can only guess as to how events unfolded that summer evening as television presenter Frank Bough, on behalf of all decent clean-living folk of Britain, expressed his indignation at IPC editor John Sanders before a salivating teatime television audience on Nationwide…

GREAT BRITAIN, 1976, TEATIME.

A long hot summer lays in wait, but already tempers seem frayed. After a hard day's graft, the nation are at home watching, um, Nationwide. Either that or ITV.

A short VT piece runs, depicting outraged tabloid headlines from the London Evening Standard, the Sun etc, before cutting back to the studio…

That Guy from Grandstand Frank Bough: So…this (holds up a copy of Action as he might a contaminated spore) is what you believe the youth of today should be reading?

Some bloke from IPC: Well…yes. Either that or Tammy.

Frank (flicks through the comic disdainfully): Severed heads…killer sharks…football hooliganism…feral youths running amok in the streets…

Some bloke: Well, we're striving to give the readership a more realistic, down to earth…

Frank: Here…is this yob actually attacking a policeman with a chain?

Some bloke: Possibly. Wonderfully rendered though, don't you think? The artist is Carlos Ezquerra and he…

Frank: (rips up comic): Filth. Utter filth!

Some bloke: Heh.

Frank: I'm sorry, do you find all this amusing Mr Sanders?

Some bloke: Not really. Just thinking out loud.

Frank: About?

Some bloke: Hmm?

Frank: About what, Mr Saunders? Producing more filth?

Some bloke: Oh, no. Legacy, actually.

Frank: Legacy?

Some bloke: Well, yes… you see in years to come people will talk about the comic you've just torn up in revered tones. They'll write long, loving nostalgic articles, whole tomes even, on the subject. Its contents will be lovingly repackaged and reprinted and the legacy of its editors, writers and artists will outlast their own lifetimes.

Whereas your legacy, sir, if any, will amount to little more than a sordid sex scandal exposed by the very tabloid newspapers you currently pander to. And the legacy of all this (waves arms, indicates the Nationwide studio) will be the bloody One Show! Good day, sir.

It didn't happen like that, but perhaps it should have.

If Action was doomed, the next major launch from IPC would have an even bigger and long lasting impact. It's impossible to overstate just how impressive 2000AD is as it lands on that newsagents counter in February 1977. Quality from first page to last, a real depth to each story, groundbreaking layouts that include near full page splashes (rare in UK comics) it also quickly forms a language and identity all its own, with an alien editor to boot. Tharg's continual boasting was not without justification; a lot of care, thought, and preparation has gone into a comic which to begin with (and ironically in a weekly that looked to the future) was a mix of old and new. There's the familiar fantastic art of Jesus Blasco on the Invasion strip (daringly depicting the assassination of future prime minister Margaret Thatcher) and the wonderful Dave Gibbons on brutal future sports strip Harlem Heroes. Throw in a clever mix of time travel and dinosaurs (Flesh) and a Six Million Dollar Man rip-off (M.A.C.H. 1) and you've got yourself a winner. Yet the real big draw for those initial issues was Dan Dare, wonderfully brought to life by Italian Massimo Belardinelli, whose fantastical futuristic designs of spaceports, shuttles and the mesmerising surface of Jupiter, home to the alien 'Biogs' rightfully claimed the prestige colour double-page spread. Immediately there's a coherence, a confidence, a brash style and swagger on display that's unusual for UK comics, all in place even before a certain 'lawman of the future' arrives in the second issue. With the later introduction of creator credits, readers (as had been the case in UK Marvel reprints for years now) would begin to associate certain names with their favourite strips; Gibbons, Gibson, McMahon, Mills, Wagner, Bolland, Belardinelli, O'Neil, Leach, ...all coalescing around a title which seemed to just get better and better.

Back then, there was a brief echo of the earlier Action furore surrounding the new title. You become aware of it, there at the newsagents counter one Saturday morning in 1977. A new shop assistant disdainfully inspects the cover of the latest Prog before handing it over in exchange for your 9p Earth Money, comment from on high that you 'won't be buying this rubbish' for much longer as 'they're banning it'. You silently leave, your new prog clasped protectively in your hand, puzzling as to the reason for such ire. You check the cover, one you'll come to realise years later is by Brian Bolland. A returning astronaut looks horrified, newly-infected by the multitude of small alien life forms protruding out from all over his body. One has its arms crossed angrily, looking up to the horrified host as if this is somehow all his fault, and just what the hell does he propose to do about it. It's a wonderful piece of art, at once impressive, amusing, and ever so slightly horrific. Years later, long since departed from your place of birth, you'll often catch sight of it and wonder if that old newsagents is still around. If so, perhaps that particular shop assistant is still working there, issuing increasingly vitriolic threats of cancelation more intensely each week at some other kid wanders in purchasing the latest prog?

'The Colours of the Rainbow' seems an odd title for a piece looking back at a period of history when comics were mass-produced on piss-poor quality paper and predominantly in black and white. Yet it's the only title that could suffice, out of respect and admiration of the wonderful, colourful imaginations of the men and women who made their living writing, drawing and producing UK comics back then. (Who'd want to read Charley's War in anything but glorious black and white anyway?)

Black and white. Dull. Brown. A three-day week and the whole bloody country going to the dogs. Due to electric blackouts, the telly clicks off during the Generation Game, and the family home is plunged again into darkness yet again. Everyone sits around, playing cards, talking to each other. As the card games end and the power cut still drags on and the adults grumble about missing their favourite television show, the young kid settles down with their new comic. There, in that strange otherworld, the flickering glow of candlelight catches their look of wonder and excitement.

Author: Peter Gouldson | **Twitter:** @gouldp7070

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:20 Page 10

The south's premier COMIC con

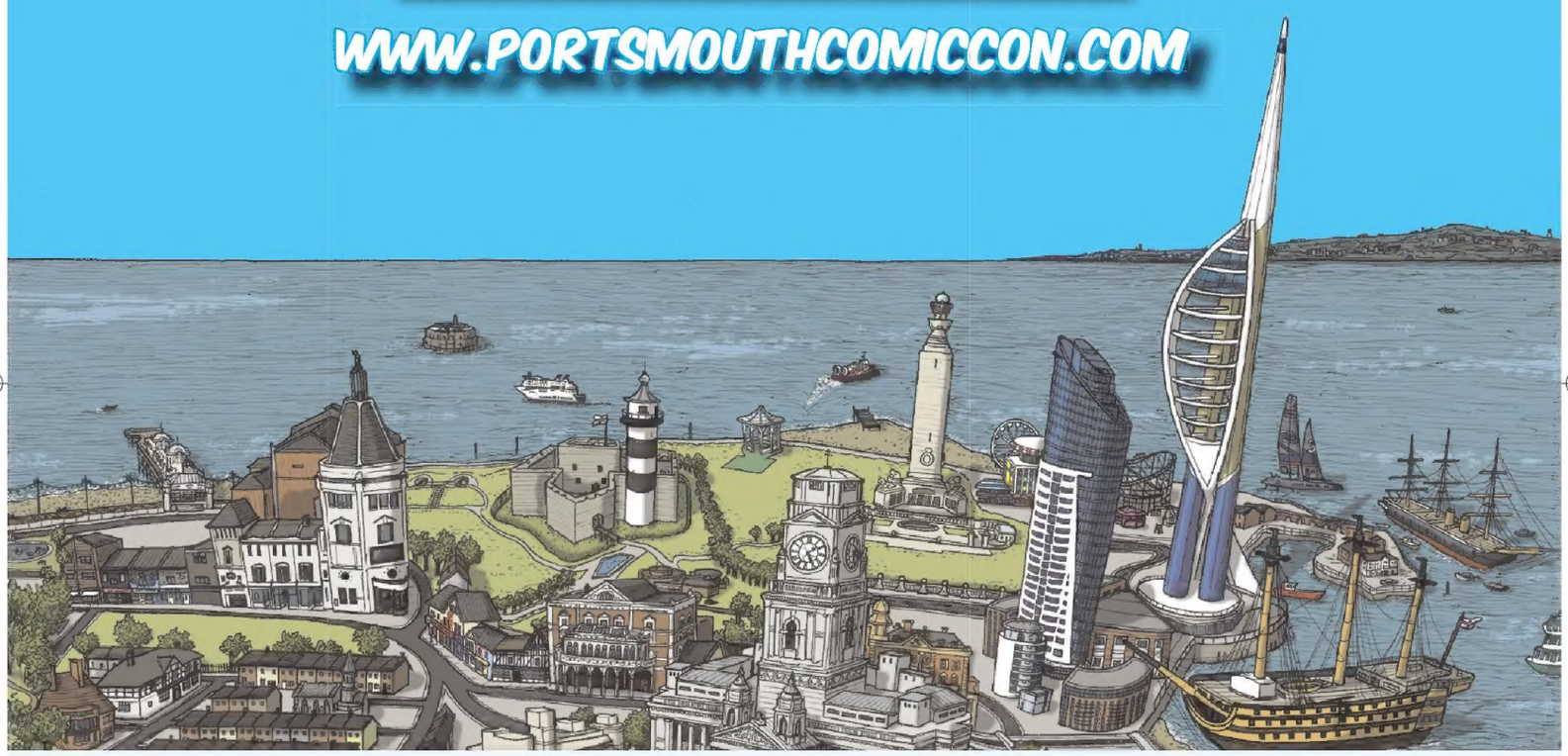
FEATURING SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN COMICS:

PORTSMOUTH

COMIC CON

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF COMICS

WWW.PORTSMOUTHCOMICCON.COM



ADAM HUGHES
WONDER WOMAN/HELLBOY/TOMB RAIDER

RICK LEONARDI
SPIDERMAN 2099/DARTH VADER/JUSTICE LEAGUE

DAVID MICHELINIE
SPIDER-MAN/SUPERMAN/RAI

JANET K LEE
RETURN OF THE DAPPER MEN/EMMA

JUNE BRIGMAN
POWER PACK/THE FLASH/ CAPTAIN GINGER

KATIE SCHENKEL
MOONLIGHTERS/THE CARDBOARD KINGDOM

ETHERINGTON BROTHERS
HOW TO THINK WHEN YOU DRAW/STAR WARS

ROY RICHARDSON
THE FLASH/CAPTAIN GINGER/SOLD AVENGERS

TROY ALDERS
STAR WARS

RUSSELL WALKS
STAR WARS/STAR TREK/DR WHO

KEIRAN BELSHAW
GAME OF THRONES/DREDD

PAUL FRY
DC/CRIMES OF PASSION

MARGUERITE SAUVAGE
ARCHIE/DC/MARVEL

GARY ERSKINE
2000AD/STAR WARS/JUDGE DREDD

STUART MOORE
CIVIL WAR/DEADPOOL/DAREDEVIL

P. CRAIG RUSSELL
SANDMAN/NIGHT MUSIC/BATMAN

SIGNINGS * GAMING * PANELS * FAMILY FUN * MERCH * COSPLAY

2-3RD MAY 2020

PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL

GoGeeK events

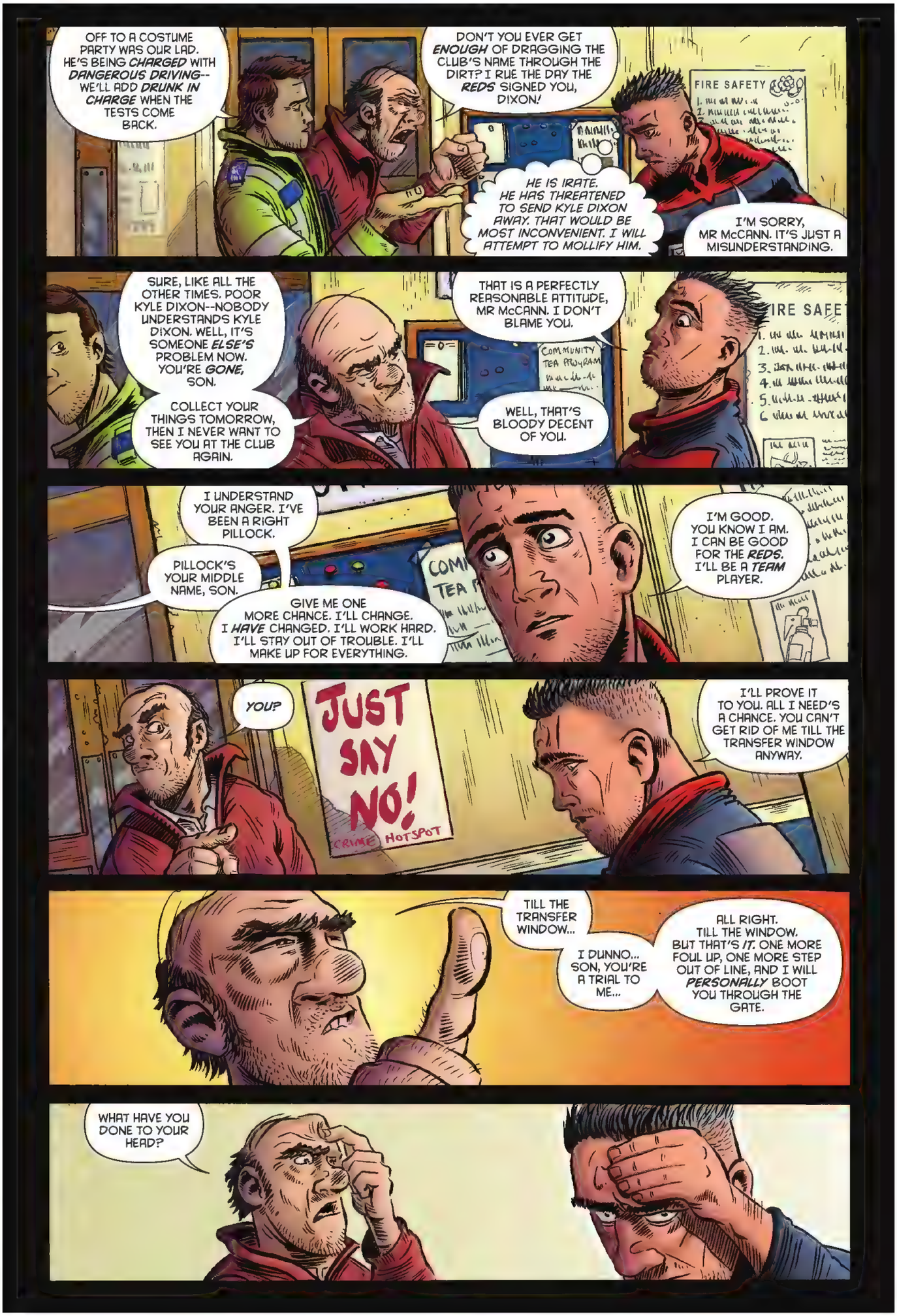
Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:20 Page 11

KYLE DIXON, FOOTBALL'S BAD BOY.
THE IDENTITY SUITS MY PURPOSE WELL ENOUGH.
ROK of the REDS
PART THREE
FLEEING ALIEN ASSASSINS ROK OF ARKADY HAS ARRIVED ON EARTH AND ASSUMED THE FORM OF THE FIRST HUMAN HE ENCOUNTERS...
IT MUST, FOR I CANNOT ATTEMPT ANOTHER MORPHOSIS UNTIL I REGAIN MY STRENGTH. NOR DARE I REVEAL MYSELF TO THESE PRIMITIVE CREATURES THAT CALL THEMSELVES HUMANS...
TO REMAIN SECURE UPON THIS FAR-FLUNG WORLD, UNDETECTED BY MY ENEMIES, ROK MUST DISAPPEAR.
I WILL BE THIS KYLE DIXON.

MY SHIP MAY REMAIN HERE, HIDDEN FROM PRYING EYES.
WHO'S THERE?
COME OUT! SHOW YOURSELF! THIS IS THE POLICE!

KEEP COMING, YOU. YOU'VE GOT SOME EXPLAINING TO DO.
WELL IF IT ISN'T *KYLE DIXON!*
WHAT THE DEVIL ARE YOU *WEARING?* FANCY *DRESS?*
*AN OFFICER OF THE **LAW**, LOWLY OF RANK. I MUST ADDRESS HIM IN THE MANNER OF KYLE DIXON.*
YOU'RE NOT ON THE PITCH NOW, DIXON. I'D ADVISE YOU TO WATCH YOUR LIP.
NOT TOO SMART, WAS IT, GETTING TANKED UP *BEFORE* THE PARTY? I SAW YOU HITTING THOSE PARKED CARS--AND THERE'S THE DENTS TO PROVE IT.
BLOW INTO THIS.
WHAT'S IT TO YOU, PLOD?
POLICE

I'VE GOT YOU NAILED DOWN, SON.
IN YOUR DREAMS.
ZERO ALCOHOL? MUST BE FAULTY.
THE BLOOD TEST WILL SORT THIS. I'M TAKING YOU TO THE STATION, DIXON. YOU'RE UNDER ARREST ON SUSPICION OF DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE.
POLICE
I WAS AT THE MATCH TODAY.
LUCKY YOU.
SADLY, NO. SOME IDIOT GOT HIMSELF SENT OFF, LOST US THE GAME. Oh, THAT WAS YOU, WASN'T IT?
ORD POLIC STATION
RADFORD POLICE
POLIC
YOU KNOW, YOU COULD BE SOMETHING SPECIAL, DIXON. YOU'VE GOT ALL THE TALENT... AND YOU'RE JUST PISSING IT AWAY.
YEAH YEAH, YADDA YADDA.
A COPY OF THE RESULTS WILL BE SENT TO YOU PERSONALLY. USUALLY TAKES A COUPLE OF DAYS BUT I KNOW THEY'LL WANT TO RUSH THIS THROUGH.
I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF CALLING YOUR MANAGER. ANDY McCANN MUST LOVE YOU.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DRESSED AS?


OFF TO A COSTUME PARTY WAS OUR LAD. HE'S BEING CHARGED WITH DANGEROUS DRIVING-- WE'LL ADD DRUNK IN CHARGE WHEN THE TESTS COME BACK.
DON'T YOU EVER GET ENOUGH OF DRAGGING THE CLUB'S NAME THROUGH THE DIRT? I RUE THE DAY THE REDS SIGNED YOU, DIXON!
FIRE SAFETY
HE IS IRATE. HE HAS THREATENED TO SEND KYLE DIXON AWAY. THAT WOULD BE MOST INCONVENIENT. I WILL ATTEMPT TO MOLLIFY HIM.
I'M SORRY, MR McCANN. IT'S JUST A MISUNDERSTANDING.
SURE, LIKE ALL THE OTHER TIMES. POOR KYLE DIXON--NOBODY UNDERSTANDS KYLE DIXON. WELL, IT'S SOMEONE ELSE'S PROBLEM NOW. YOU'RE GONE, SON.
COLLECT YOUR THINGS TOMORROW, THEN I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AT THE CLUB AGAIN.
THAT IS A PERFECTLY REASONABLE ATTITUDE, MR McCANN. I DON'T BLAME YOU.
COMMUNITY TEA PROGRAM
WELL, THAT'S BLOODY DECENT OF YOU.
I UNDERSTAND YOUR ANGER. I'VE BEEN A RIGHT PILLOCK.
PILLOCK'S YOUR MIDDLE NAME, SON.
GIVE ME ONE MORE CHANCE. I'LL CHANGE. I HAVE CHANGED. I'LL WORK HARD. I'LL STAY OUT OF TROUBLE. I'LL MAKE UP FOR EVERYTHING.
I'M GOOD. YOU KNOW I AM. I CAN BE GOOD FOR THE REDS. I'LL BE A TEAM PLAYER.
YOU?
JUST SAY NO!
CRIME HOTSPOT
I'LL PROVE IT TO YOU. ALL I NEED'S A CHANCE. YOU CAN'T GET RID OF ME TILL THE TRANSFER WINDOW ANYWAY.
TILL THE TRANSFER WINDOW...
I DUNNO... SON, YOU'RE A TRIAL TO ME...
ALL RIGHT. TILL THE WINDOW. BUT THAT'S IT. ONE MORE FOUL UP, ONE MORE STEP OUT OF LINE, AND I WILL PERSONALLY BOOT YOU THROUGH THE GATE.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO YOUR HEAD?

MY MENTALIZER SHOWING THROUGH...
IT'S A BRUISE. MUST HAVE HIT IT ON THE STEERING WHEEL.
THAT PROBABLY ACCOUNTS FOR THE CHANGE OF ATTITUDE. WELL, LET'S HOPE THE EFFECTS DON'T WEAR OFF. COME WITH ME.
YOUR LANDLADY REFUSES TO HAVE YOU BACK. I'VE GOT YOUR THINGS IN THE CAR. I'LL RING ASHCROFT GUEST HOUSE--BEST I CAN DO FOR NOW. AND WHEN WE GET THERE, BE POLITE.
POUR ON THE CHARM, huh? NO PROB. CHARM'S MY MIDDLE NAME.
NO--IT'S PILLOCK, REMEMBER?
320
COME IN, COME IN!
GRANDAD! IT'S KYLE! IT'S KYLE!
AYE, I SEE THAT.
WHAT'S HE WEARING?

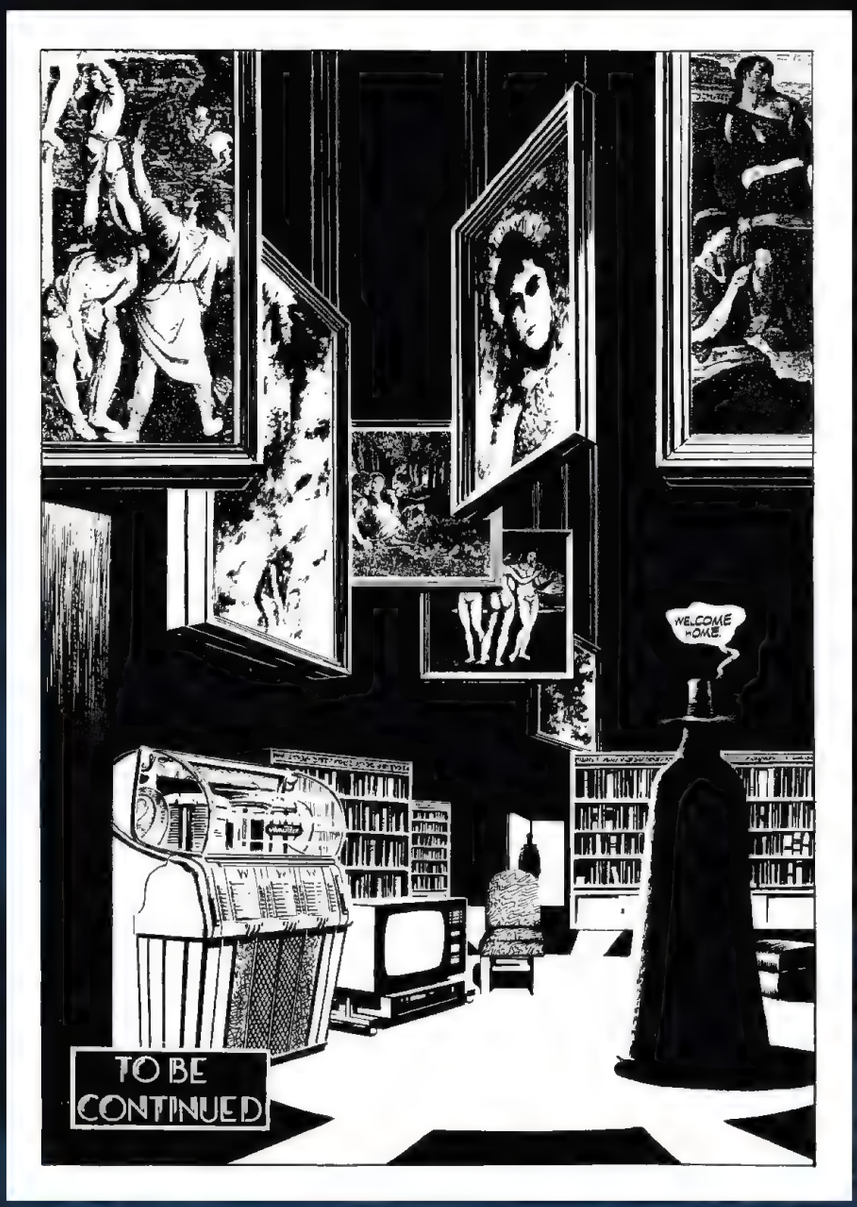
TWO O'CLOCK AND HE HASN'T BUDGED FROM THAT ROOM ALL DAY.
LOOKED LIKE HE'D DOWNED A FEW LAST NIGHT. NOT FEELING TOO CHIPPER, I'LL WARRANT.
THE HUMAN FORM IS MORE DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN THAN EXPECTED. I CAN ABSORB SUFFICIENT ENERGY FROM THE ETHER TO RECHARGE MY MORPHOLIDS, BUT THE PROCESS IS SLOW. WHEN TIME ALLOWS I WILL CONSTRUCT A PROPER REGENERATOR.
NO THANK YOU, MRS PLUNKETT. I'VE LOST MY APPETITE.
I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU WOULD ARRANGE TRANSPORTATION TO THE FOOTBALL GROUND IN THE MORNING. THE POLICE HAVE MY CAR.
Oh, that's no worry. Dad will drive you.
JAKE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? GET AWAY FROM THERE!
GO DOWNSTAIRS, HELP YOUR GRANDAD OR SOMETHING.
KYLE, WILL YOU BE COMING DOWN FOR DINNER?
rap
rap

THE HERO RETURNS!
NICE GOING SATURDAY, GENIUS. YOUR TALENT KNOWS NO BOUNDS.
TALENT FOR FOULING UP.
I HEARD SOMEONE GAVE YOU A *DOING* SATURDAY. NOT BEFORE TIME.
QUIET EVERYONE. KYLE'S GOT SOMETHING TO SAY.
HOME
M'C

LADS, I'VE BEEN A PRAT.
YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN.
I COST US THE POINTS AND IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME. I'M SORRY. I REALLY AM SORRY. I'M GOING TO DO MY BEST TO MAKE IT UP TO YOU.
I'LL BELIEVE IT WHEN I SEE IT.
RIGHT, BOSS.
TACZ
THAT'S ENOUGH. KYLE'S APOLOGISED AND LET'S LEAVE IT AT THAT. NOW GET OUT THERE.
KYLE, GET CHANGED THEN GO SEE THE TEAM DOCTOR. I WANT HIM TO HAVE A LOOK AT THAT MARK ON YOUR HEAD.
THE PERSONIFICATION PROCEEDS WELL. NONE SUSPECT--THOUGH I FEAR IT WILL NOT SURVIVE CLOSE MEDICAL INSPECTION. I MAY HAVE TO TAKE...EXCEPTIONAL MEASURES.
COME IN, KYLE. WHAT'S THIS I HEAR ABOUT AN ACCIDENT?
THAT IS ODD...FEELS LIKE SOMETHING HARD IN THERE. STRANGE SHAPE. DON'T LIKE IT AT ALL. I'M GOING TO SEND YOU FOR A SCAN.
I REGRET I CAN'T ALLOW THAT.
KYLE, THIS COULD BE SERIOUS.
THE DOCTOR'S DISAPPEARANCE WOULD BE NOTED. I MUST DEAL WITH HIM BY OTHER MEANS.
IT IS SERIOUS. VERY SERIOUS. LOOK AT IT CLOSELY. CLOSELY.
GOOD GOD, IT-IT'S--
MORE NEXT ISSUE!

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:20 Page 20

WARRIORS OF THE WASTELANDS



Dez Skinn's company, Quality Communications published Warrior between 1982 and 1985. The black and white monthly was an anthology featuring early work from creators such as Alan Moore, Alan Davis, Steve Dillon, David Lloyd and Steve Parkhouse. The comic is probably best known as the home of V for Vendetta (in its original black and white version) and the Alan Moore's update and reinvention of Marvelman (subsequently known as Miracleman). This comic, although not without controversy, was a creator owned enterprise, which appealed to the writers and artists who contributed to it over its 26 monthly issues.

(From an interview with Dez Skinn 25th May 2017)

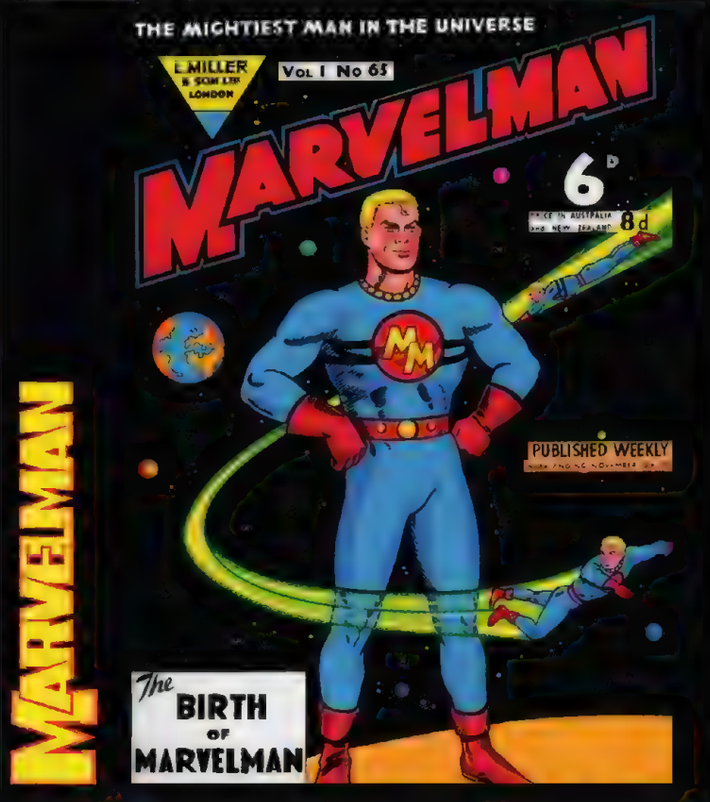
At Marvel UK, Skinn used the profits from reprint titles to create new material. But it was all company owned. So, when he left he thought it would be great to do the same thing again, but with the creators owning the ideas. "The writers and artists weren't working just for that issue's cheque but were creating things they'd get royalties from. From merchandising, from overseas syndication… from areas they'd never had a piece of before." Of course, as a publisher he also recognised the fact that if you own something yourself you do far better work than if it's just for a one-off flat fee. In fact, the old way actively discourages creating new ideas. And so, Issue 1 of Warrior was launched in March 1982. The editorial in issue 1 was a bold statement of intent… "John F Kennedy once said that the best road to progress is

freedom's road. Whether Warrior represents progress in the evolution of British comics magazines, only you can decide, but we definitely feel it's our first step on to "Freedom's Road'."

With Warrior, Skinn took all the best ideas from Marvel UK and cunningly disguised them as non-copyright infringing new concepts. Captain Britain became Marvelman, Night Raven became V for Vendetta, Conan became Father Shandor Demon Stalker, Doctor Who Weekly's Abslom Daak: Dalek Killer became Axel Pressbutton, the psychotic cyborg, and so on. Dez knew he wanted a token superhero in the anthology. While the content was a variety show mix, traditional in British comics, it was also a fantasy mix. So, the mix reflected horror, sci-fi, fantasy and superheroes. Superhero stories were rare in the UK at the time, they're a unique US concept because they've killed off all their legends and had to create new ones. But if it was only one out of six strips, he didn't think they would lose any readers by having a guy in spandex. It would have been easy enough to create a new character but Dez actually owed a huge debt of gratitude to a comics veteran of the 1950s, a guy with the unlikely name of Mick Anglo. When he once said that couldn't be his real name he replied, "No. It's actually Michael Anglo.". When Dez first went down to London in search of fame and fortune, Mick had just launched Super DC, a monthly reprint of Superman and Batman strips. In an attempt to escape provincial newspapers, he'd been Skinn's first port of call. "I know all about Superman and Batman so I'd be a great help on the comic" was how Skinn sold himself. That the pitch failed didn't matter. He gave him the name of another company and he got his first job in London, at IPC.

Dez Skinn was concerned that Marvel might kick off about Marvelman, so he ran an "in no way connected with..." disclaimer each issue and initially didn't even feature his name on the cover. But that was also repeating the approach he used when he brought back Captain Britain. Instead of screaming it out on the cover, it was a surprise; a bonus for those old enough to remember who the character was, with a few clues in both cases before the big reveal. But Marvel didn't kick off about Marvelman. Not a word. In fact, they even published a Captain Britain strip with a cameo of him in it. But the mistake Skinn made, in honouring his agreement with Mick Anglo, was in the packaging. It was a full- blown Marvelman Special that caused the issue. Suddenly the name was BIG on the cover. Suddenly they noticed. So that, coupled with a few creative fallings out was the end of Marvelman for Skinn.

Axel Pressbutton had previously been offered to 2000 AD, but the editor had said, "What's to stop him pressing his own button?". Steve Moore replied "What's to stop you pressing yours?"

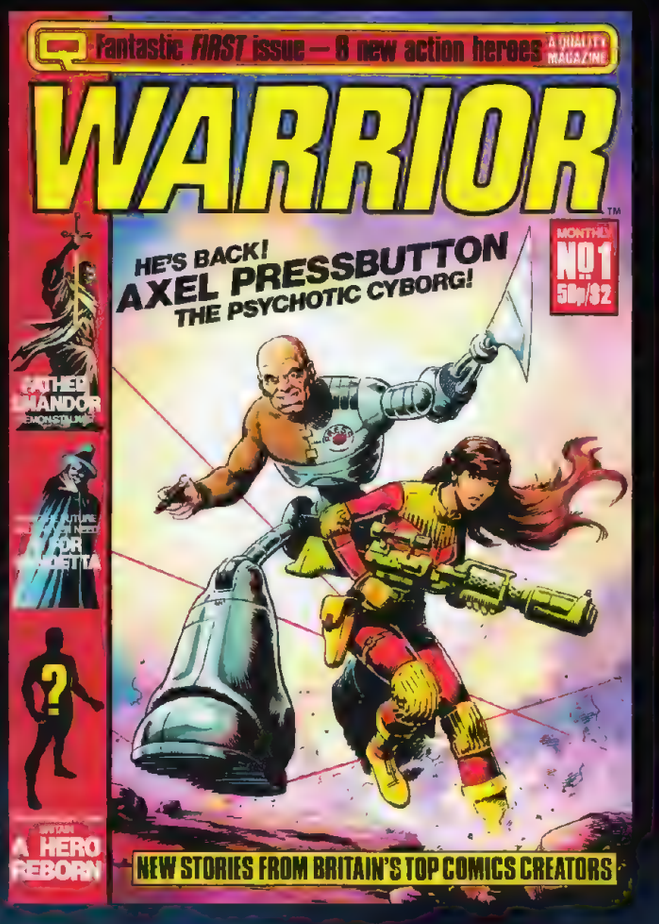


Dez had known writer Steve Moore since the late 1960s and he'd been a key member of his team as he wandered through the British comics industry. He'd worked for Dez on House of Hammer, Starburst, Hulk Comic, Doctor Who Weekly and the rest. At the latter, Skinn encouraged the creation of new non-BBC owned characters and Moore would come up with a drunken barbarian lunatic chainsaw wielding Dalek-Killer, Abslom Daak. That went down well with the readers. So, knowing the character had been based on a vegetable hating interstellar psychotic cyborg, Skinn suggested bringing him into the magazine. Steve suggested he'd need somebody to talk to and came up with a

Laser Eraser buddy. Skinn threw in that a "beauty and the beast" angle might prove more popular. So, they added Mysta Mystralis as the Laser Eraser. The irony of the strip was that Axel was accompanying this drop-dead gorgeous female but as vegan green slime had eaten away everything below his waist, his version of ecstasy was limited to asking people to press his chest button (which would send an electric rush to his brain).

Another example of his 'throw nothing away' mentality, Big Ben's creation went back to Skinn's mid 1970s days in Warner House when he was trying to come up with new titles. One had been a somewhat generically titled "British Superheroes" and Big Ben (the Man With No Time For Crime) had been the lead character. It never got past the dummy stage but he figured a mix between The Avengers' John Steed and Batman in an Austin Powers-style reality would be fun to do. When he got around to Warrior, Ben was always meant to appear – he's even on the cover of issue 4. Skinn asked Alan Moore to do a "reader warm-up" with the character in the Marvelman strip, but him being him, he totally reimagined the character as a gormless neanderthal, making it near impossible to tie-in with what Skinn already had planned. But then, these are the challenges you rise to in a creative medium. If it's too easy, you're probably doing it wrong! Eventually the strip appeared in issues 19 to 26, written by Dez and drawn by Will Simpson.

Warrior's biggest success was probably V for Vendetta. "In Night Raven, David Lloyd had done a brilliant job of depicting a pulp-style masked and enigmatic vigilante in prohibition Chicago at Marvel UK. Stan Lee hated it, but I loved it and went with it anyway. So, for Warrior, I suggested we did the same again, but set it in future England, so it wouldn't infringe on copyright. That we were one or two years away from an Orwellian 1984 with Margaret Thatcher as PM seemed a perfect backdrop for such a character." Relative newcomer Alan Moore was suggested as



writer and came up with the name Ace of Shades. "It really didn't inspire me, but it took me a couple of weeks to think of a better name," said Skinn.

"An aside: There's no point criticising anything if you don't have a better alternative. And I thought an anti-hero spin on Churchill's V for Victory was a better alternative.

Funnily enough, I was being pressured not to run this strip either. This time it was my distributor, who I'd worked with all the way back to my MAD days. The company's MD, he said he loved our scissor and paste up mock-up of issue one… except for V for Vendetta. He found David's non-compromising art style hard on the eye (he put it more strongly) and for the success of the title begged me to use "something nicer, like all the other strips".

Creator control led to problems. Some stories were never completed (Madman and Laser Eraser and Pressbutton to name but two) and issues began to turn up late when contributors missed deadlines and fill-in artists could not be commissioned, as the originating artists owned the work. Warrior ended its run with issue 26 in 1985. After Warrior's collapse, Skinn signed all the Warrior work (except V for Vendetta) to Pacific Comics. They folded within months, and another American independent publisher, Eclipse Comics, picked them up. V ended up at DC Comics where it completed its story, before being collected into the graphic novel we know today. Miracleman eventually ended up at Marvel, after various legal battles. The first issue, reprinting the re-coloured and re-lettered stories from Warrior #1 & 2, Miracleman #1, was released on 15th of January, 2014 and ran until 6th of January, 2016, where it concluded the run of the Golden Age. The book then went on hiatus, while we wait on new material. We are still awaiting the official continuation and completion of Miracleman by Neil Gaiman and Mark Buckingham…

Was Warrior a success? In a way, it was way ahead of its time. Look at Image Comics modern day success as an example. However, the model also highlighted the inherent problems with creator owned content, such as a lack of stability in the line-up, creative differences and the fact that when the creators walked, the strip walked with them. However, look at the legacy of the strips and the creators who graced the pages of Warrior. Their influence is still felt over 35 years later, surely a great legacy for a comic which only lasted 26 issues!

Author: Phillip Vaughan | **Twitter:**@phillipbvaughan

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:21 Page 24

Part Two

Happy Times and Places
40 YEARS of DOCTOR WHO
Comic Strip in Doctor Who Weekly and Doctor Who Magazine

LOVELY! IT'S KIND OF LIKE THE OPENING CREDITS TO BATTLESTAR GALACTICA...
THIS ISN'T A MOVIE, IZZY. THAT'S THE REAL DEAL OUT THERE...
SURE, BUT IT'S...
...
I WAS HOPING YOUR FRAMES OF REFERENCE MIGHT HAVE EXPANDED A LITTLE DURING YOUR TIME IN THE TARDIS...
BUT YOU'RE STILL COMPARING EVERYTHING TO SIMPLISTIC FANTASIES! COULDN'T YOU...
IZZY...?
Artwork: Robin S
Roger Lang

The Marvel UK/Panini Doctor Who comic strip is, by any standards, a publishing phenomenon. In 1979, Doctor Who was riding on a tide of popularity. The programme began its 17th season and the eccentric, scarf-wearing Tom Baker was the definitive Time Lord in the eyes of a generation of young viewers. The time was right for a comic dedicated to the adventures of the Doctor!

Dez Skinn, whose many previous comic credits included IPC titles such as Whizzer and Chips, Cor! and Buster, was the man with the vision to launch a successful Doctor Who comic. Headhunted by Stan Lee to work at Marvel UK, Dez felt that British readers were not of the mindset for superheroes. He wanted to take household names and give them the comics treatment. As Dez reflects today, 'I'd been wanting to produce a dedicated Doctor Who title since my days at Warner Bros, doing House of Hammer. But back in the days when an exclusive license was a strictly adhered-to principle, Polystyle's two page Doctor Who strip in TV Comic was all that the BBC would allow. So as soon as it was dropped, I leaped in.' Thus, in October 1979, Doctor Who Weekly hit the newsstands.

Did Dez want the Doctor Who strip to emulate the television series or did he feel it should go off in its own direction? 'Very much the latter. The TV series was restricted, both in its storylines and its scenes, by what could actually be achieved on screen. Comics creators have no restrictions other than their imaginations. I remember an American pal, who adapted Star Wars for Marvel in 1978 saying how films could never compete with an artist's imagination until Star Wars. Suddenly it was tough for artists to compete with cinema FX. Fortunately, we didn't have that problem!'

Comics legends Pat Mills and John Wagner were the writers of four classic Fourth Doctor strips starting with the classic Doctor Who and The Iron Legion in October 1979, which featured robot legionnaires from another dimension where the Roman Empire never fell. The two writers took turns scripting the stories but were credited as co-writers on each instalment. Those early strips still resonate today and two have been popular enough to be adapted for audio by Big Finish - can Dez put his finger on why they were so good? 'Pat and John knew the ropes. They'd been through the regulation training that no longer seems to exist. They'd slaved away on DC Thomson and IPC/Fleetway [illegible]

Artwork: Dave Gibbons

storytelling for years, honing their craft. They knew their market, they didn't write for themselves, as so many often crassly state when asked. In a word: professionalism.'

John Wagner had strong ideas about the direction he wanted the strip to take. John recalls: 'There was much about the way they were doing the show that we didn't like, including a lot of their storylines, so we went our own way. The TV series would have benefitted from following our lead, though most of our ideas admittedly might have been too expensive to stage on a BBC budget – that's one of the many advantages of picture strip.'

Mills and Wagner's third Doctor Who strip, 1980's Doctor Who and the Star Beast (credited to both but written by Pat), introduced a new companion for the Doctor in the form of Sharon. The first companion of colour in Doctor Who in any medium, Sharon was a secondary school student from the fictional town of Blackcastle and somehow seemed more rooted in reality than some of her television counterparts. The same story introduced the character of Beep the Meep, a cuddly furry creature with long ears who was initially a homicidal galactic criminal!

The legendary Dave Gibbons was the artist for many of the early strips. 'I'd kinda mentioned him around 1979/'80,' explains Pat, 'when he used to come up to see me [illegible] I'd always believed in Dave's talent [illegible] Dave's style was ideal for Doctor Who, it had the kind of slightly wry, down-to-earth humour that I always tried to inject into my scripts, from the comic book of Doctor Who Stories through to Starburst and Warrior, so it was a no-brainer here.' Gibbons was to be a regular on the strip until 1982.

Doctor Who comics historian Paul Scoones feels that the arrival of the Weekly saw a massive increase in the quality of both the artwork and the writing compared to the Doctor Who strips seen in earlier publications. 'Pat Mills and John Wagner are skilled storytellers in the comics medium,' he reflects, 'and Dave Gibbons is a truly superb illustrator. Together they produced a fantastic set of stories for Doctor Who Weekly. But there's more to it than that. The Marvel strip was also properly about Doctor Who. The earlier strip in TV Comic had necessarily featured fairly straight-forward adventures that didn't require very much knowledge of the series, in order to ensure the strip still appealed to those enjoying the exploits of Tom and Jerry and the Pink Panther in the same pages. Doctor Who Weekly however was aimed at readers specifically interested in the Doctor's adventures, and so the strip could frequently reference aspects from the television series. The increase in length was also important. TV Comic's strip had usually been two pages and for a time in the 1970s only a single page per issue. The problem with such short instalments was that there was barely enough space for the Doctor to extricate himself from the peril of one cliffhanger before landing in the next, leaving little room to tell a coherent story. The Doctor Who Weekly strip was four to five pages, allowing more room to develop characters and introduce more complexity.'

"the tale of a hardened criminal who hated Daleks and vowed to kill "every damned stinking Dalek in the galaxy!'

What advantages does Paul feel the strip had over the TV incarnation of Doctor Who? 'The comic-strip effectively has an unlimited budget for location shoots and set design!' he explains. 'For an example of this, you don't need to look any further than The Iron Legion, which features a vast arena populated with an audience of thousands, and an air battle amongst towering structures. Both of which would be impossible to realise on television, especially in 1979.'

If you're wondering about the Daleks, they were also present in the Weekly from issue one, initially appearing separately from the Doctor in their own back-up strip, 'The Return of the Daleks' by Steve Moore. Readers were also introduced to 'Abslom Daak... Dalek Killer' (1980), the tale of a hardened criminal who hated Daleks and vowed to kill 'every damned stinking Dalek in the galaxy!'

In September 1980 (issue 44), Doctor Who Weekly became a monthly publication, initially being called Doctor Who Marvel Monthly, then Doctor Who Monthly and eventually Doctor Who Magazine.

JELLY BABIES, TOO "OH, HELLO! I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU ACCEPT ZAGGAN POUND NOTES..?
THEY'RE A LITTLE ON THE SLIMY SIDE, BUT ABSOLUTELY INFLATION-PROOF!
THEY'RE COMING!

Artwork: Dave Gibbons

Artwork. John Ridgway

Steve Parkhouse joined the writers roster and, in 1982, a new Doctor began his tenure on both television and on the printed page - the youthful, cricket-loving Fifth Doctor played by Peter Davison.

The Fifth Doctor's comic strip era in Doctor Who Monthly was to be relatively short - just six stories, all written by Steve Parkhouse. Steve had strong views on the direction the Fifth Doctor's character should take as he recalled in Comic Scene Volume Two Issue Two: 'From my perspective, the Doctor's character doesn't actually change with each incarnation. He remains the Englishman abroad in all his different guises, so writing the Fifth Doctor was no different from the Fourth. I just kept the English eccentric facade intact, which was reinforced by the publicity stills that I'd been sent.'

The Fifth Doctor spent much of his time in the village of Stockbridge where he met the character of Maxwell Edison, a middle aged UFO enthusiast who would go on to help the Time Lord over several incarnations. Another regular was Shayde, a construct that was able to emulate and merge with other beings. Monsters from the television show were a little thin on the ground but the Doctor did encounter the Ice Warriors, popular foes from the television eras of Patrick Troughton and Jon Pertwee, who made a memorable appearance in the story '4-Dimensional Vistas'.

Colin Baker was the sixth actor to play the Doctor, resplendent in his multi-coloured coat, and many fans feel that his comic strip era was more successful than his televised stories. The Doctor's television companion Peri (played by Nicola Bryant) joined the Doctor for many of his comic adventures as well as as a shape-changing alien called Frobisher who spent much of his time in the form of a penguin! Unusually, just one artist oversaw the Sixth Doctor's adventures, John Ridgway, with Steve Parkhouse and Alan McKenzie amongst the writers.

John Ridgway is clear about which of his stories he remembers most fondly 'Favourite has to be 'Voyager'. That is where I started to hit my stride. Steve Parkhouse's story gave me a chance to stretch my imagination. I also really enjoyed 'Nature of the Beast' by Simon Furman - I was finally getting the hang of drawing females!'

Scott Gray, who currently oversees the 13th Doctor's stories, agrees about 'Voyager' : 'It was the first issue of DWM I ever read, just before the 100th issue. It was the last chapter of the story, the really crazy one where Astrolabus (a renegade Time Lord) is running across the white page, trying to get to the next episode. I didn't know what I was reading! It was beautifully drawn, completely ganzo, but also very powerful. That dark ending where Voyager shows up, and Astrolabus asks the Doctor if he knows how long he's been writing his life, and then dies... it's magic. I didn't realise it at the time, but it was Parkhouse's last story, so there's yet another layer of meta-fun going on there.'

Late 1986 saw the sudden departure of Colin Baker from Doctor Who when he declined an offer to appear in only the first four episodes of the programme's 24th season. In came Scottish actor Sylvester

Artwork: Robin Smith/Roger Langridge

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:21 Page 27

McCoy (well known for children's programmes such as Vision On and Jigsaw) as the seventh incarnation of the Time Lord. An enigmatic and mysterious character, the Seventh Doctor was to prove to be perfect for the comics medium.

Whereas the Colin Baker era had been dominated by the artwork of John Ridgway, the Seventh Doctor's period saw a greater variety of contributors. Ridgway drew the opening story, 'A Cold Day in Hell' (1987-1988), and was followed by a variety of artists including Kev Hopgood and Lee Sullivan. Sullivan was responsible for two memorable Dalek stories, 'Nemesis of the Daleks' (1989) and 'Emperor of the Daleks' (1993), both of which featured the return of Absolom Daak.

John Freeman was Doctor Who Magazine's editor for much of the Seventh Doctor's comic strip tenure and faced the challenge of maintaining the momentum of the magazine when the original run of the series came to an abrupt end in 1989 after 26 seasons. John had long been a fan of the strip. 'I loved the fantastical nature of the Doctor Who comics strips written in particular by Steve Parkhouse and drawn by John Ridgway, and wanted a mix of that with the direction of the TV show. Readers seemed to want more akin to what they had seen on screen but of course in comics we were [illegible] by [illegible] effect budgets.'

Why does John think the DWM comic strip has been so successful over 40 years? 'I [illegible] the TV show but bigger and [illegible] bolder, despite being a licensed strip I consider myself very lucky that we were able to create the comics we did while I was DWM editor and to have writers such as Scott Gray, Dan Abnett and Andrew Cartmel "get" what I was after. We

Artwork Robin Smith, Roger Langridge

weren't as under the spotlight as most Doctor Who licensing presumably is today.'

As John mentions, Doctor Who TV Script Editor Andrew Cartmel was brought on broad to write four stories. 'When I was working as a script editor on the TV show,' Andrew recalls, 'I actively sought out John Freeman with a view to writing the strip in his magazine – I was a huge comic fan (mostly Alan Moore's stuff) and I wanted to break into writing for comics.'

What was Andrew's favourite of the Doctor Who strips he worked on? 'It would be 'Evening's Empire'... a very dark exploration of the mind of a fanboy gone bad.'

What are Andrew's own thoughts on why the comic strip has been such a success story? 'Because the TV show has never stopped exerting an immense appeal. And the reason for that is that it is (a) a wonderfully basic, primal and simple story of a stranger who comes into situations and rights wrongs and (b) when the program makers came up with the brilliant idea of the Doctor regenerating, it could be endlessly refreshed and never grow stale.'

With a lack of new Doctor Who on television, the Seventh Doctor enjoyed a lengthy run in the comics (albeit interspersed with new stories for the older Doctors). For a while the continuity of the strip was linked to that of the Virgin Doctor Who novels, but the strip ultimately went its own direction with the Seventh Doctor regenerating in the 1996 story 'Ground Zero' written by Scott Gray with art by Martin Geraghty and Bambos Georgiou.

Did Scott have a shopping list of [illegible] he wanted to include in this final story or did he just set out to tell an interesting tale? 'No shopping list here [illegible] that we had to [illegible] the McCoy TV run and the Paul McGann TV Movie, so from some natural [illegible] elements that I felt we should use, like breaking his umbrella and blowing up the TARDIS. Ace's end wasn't initially planned; it just grew organically as the story developed. I've done a few of these 'last Doctor' stories in the strip now, and they only really work if there's a proper emotional impact for the Doctor. This was the biggest one we ever did.'

The 1996 Doctor Who TV Movie, co-produced by the BBC and Universal and filmed in Canada, featured Paul McGann as the dashing Eighth Doctor. Seen as a 'backdoor pilot', the movie sadly never resulted in a series and the Eighth Doctor was therefore to rely on other media for the majority of his adventures - books, audio and, of course, comic strips. The companion for much of the Eighth Doctor's comic era was Izzy Sinclair, a 17 year old sci-fi fan and paranormal investigator. Izzy and the Doctor were later joined by Destrii, an amphibious fish-like alien, and in a superb storyline ('Ophidius', 2001) Izzy and Destrii swapped bodies. Another companion of the Eighth Doctor, Fey (a British undercover agent from the 1930s), would ultimately merge with Shayde, the enigmatic character from the Fifth Doctor comic strips, to form a new being.

Scott Gray was the writer of 'Ophidius' and most of the Eighth Doctor's adventures. Did he have an overarching 'masterplan' for the Eighth Doctor's era? 'No,' he explains, 'we just wanted the readers to have a good time with the Eighth Doctor, and make the stories varied in tone, and have the run relate to the DWM strip's own history. The arcs evolved quite naturally as the stories developed.'

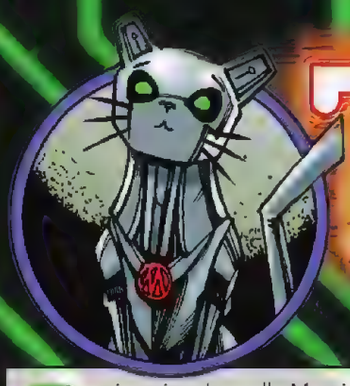
The Eighth Doctor's era came to a close in March 2005 with Scott Gray's 'The Flood'. Paul Scoones cites this as his all time favourite story: 'Over eight episodes the story gradually builds from what at first appears to be a small-scale story to something quite grand, all the while keeping focus on the tragic impact of the unfolding events on individual characters. It's extraordinarily good.'

Change was afoot. The BBC had decided to bring Doctor Who back, overseen by showrunner Russell T Davies and featuring Christopher Eccleston as the new, Ninth Doctor. An exciting new era was about to begin on screen and in the comics!

With thanks to Dez Skinn, Pat Mills, Paul Scoones, John Ridgway, Scott Gray, John Freeman, John Wagner and Andrew Cartmel.

Artwork © Doctor Who Magazine/Panini

Author: Ian Wheeler | **Twitter:** @ianwheeler_who



TechnoFreak

Bonjour, je m'appelle Maurice. I'm a French robot cat from your future. I am the narrator of the adventures of Jon Sherlok², TechnoFreak...

What's that you say? You have never heard of Technofreak? Let me enlighten you by interviewing the comic book's creative team. John Charles and Barry May are the co-writers, Tom Newell does the artwork, and Nikki Foxrobot is the letterer. John told me to mention that he also does the colouring, with the help of Chris McAuley, who does the flats. Okay, let's get started...

So, guys, what was the genesis of TechnoFreak?

John: It all started with a rave poster, in around the year 2000, with the word, 'Technofreak' on it. I thought, "What a great name for a character. I'm having that." I started doodling in my sketchbook, and chatted with Barry about the ideas. At first we were going to create a team of superheroes from another dimension called 'The Technofreaks,' then I designed a lone character as a monster. Eventually, some years later, Jon Sherlok, a private eye, also called TechnoFreak was born in my sketchbooks, and wouldn't go away. I planned to draw the comic myself, and produced a few pages over several years, but somehow was never able to do enough on the project to bring it to fruition.

Barry: John asked me to come on board and co-write with him, as we had collaborated on a few things previously and seemed to work well together. He already had an idea of what he wanted to do with the character, and the tone of the comic. I really liked what he had created and I was pleased to have the opportunity to work on such fun and interesting characters. It doesn't hurt that it's got great artwork too.

Tom: My introduction to TechnoFreak was when I was studying Cartoon & Comic Arts at Staffordshire Uni, a couple of years ago. John was one of the lecturers there and told me about this project he had been wanting to do, but he never had the time to devote to it. So, I said, "I'll draw it, mate. No probs."

Chaps, how do you go about writing TechnoFreak?

John: We generally get together in a pub and shoot the breeze about future plots. I may have written the odd scene as full script, but these are always subject to change. At some point, I hand over to Barry as he is much better at characterisation and dialogue than I am.

Barry: It's very much a collaboration. We come up with a basic plot between us and then the characters pretty much determine where it goes from there. There was a lot of back and forth before we came up with the plot for issue one, which is a fun introduction to the characters and the weird world in which they live.

Tom, what do you bring to TechnoFreak?

The artwork. No, but seriously, I enjoy trying to bring the characters to life and show each one's personality. When I started drawing TechnoFreak, I did it conventionally; pencils and inks on paper. These days, I draw straight onto computer, via my Wacom Cintiq. It gives me incredible flexibility.

Nikki, what can you tell us about lettering in it?

Lettering TechnoFreak was great fun; always nice to letter a colour comic because then I get to play around with my digital paint pot!

This one's for everyone: Who is your favourite TechnoFreak character?

John: I love them all. If I had to choose, I'd probably go for Jon. He's a bit like me. Not that I'm super-intelligent, lazy, or drink too much... I do like Loretta, Jon and Neville's love interest. She constantly surprises me. Everybody who has read TechnoFreak seems love you, Maurice. Several people have told me that you're the stand-out character.

Oh, John, stop it... You'll make me blush. If I wasn't made of such high-quality metal, I might even rust a little.

Barry: I think Jon Sherlok is the glue that holds it all together, but it's his interactions and his relationships with the other characters that I like most, notably with you, Maurice and Loretta. It's very much an ensemble piece.

Tom: Neville Brady. He actually does stuff. Jon Sherlok just stands around thinking.

Neville? Seriously? The guy's a thug!

Nikki: There's a narrating robot cat! Who wouldn't love that?!

And that's the right answer. Thank you, Ms. Foxrobot!! Je t'aime.

Could you tell us a little about the plot, guys?

Barry: Without giving too much away, the story centres around Jon Sherlok, the last of the TechnoFreaks. His best friend and constant companion is you, Maurice, a witty and sarcastic robot cat who happens to be french. Sherlok's a private detective in the London of 3026, and we follow him on his adventures. It's a fun comic with dark bits here and there.

John: Well, I'll give something away... An associate of Jon's, Neville Brady comes to Jon Sherlok asking for his assistance to find his missing girlfriend, Loretta Youth. Now, Loretta happens to be Jon's ex-girlfriend too. They go looking for her, and mayhem ensues...

So, there you have it. TechnoFreak is the fantastic new comic from Sunday Lunch Comics, about Jon Sherlok, Me, Neville and Loretta. Issues #1 and #2 are out now, and #3 should be out for Mid-March. For more info, and to purchase TechnoFreak mail order, go to: sundaylunchcomics.com

TechnoFreak #1-3 covers, by Tom Newell and John Charles.

Issue #3 should be out in mid-March

Original TechnoFreak concept sketch from approximately 2000 by John Charles.

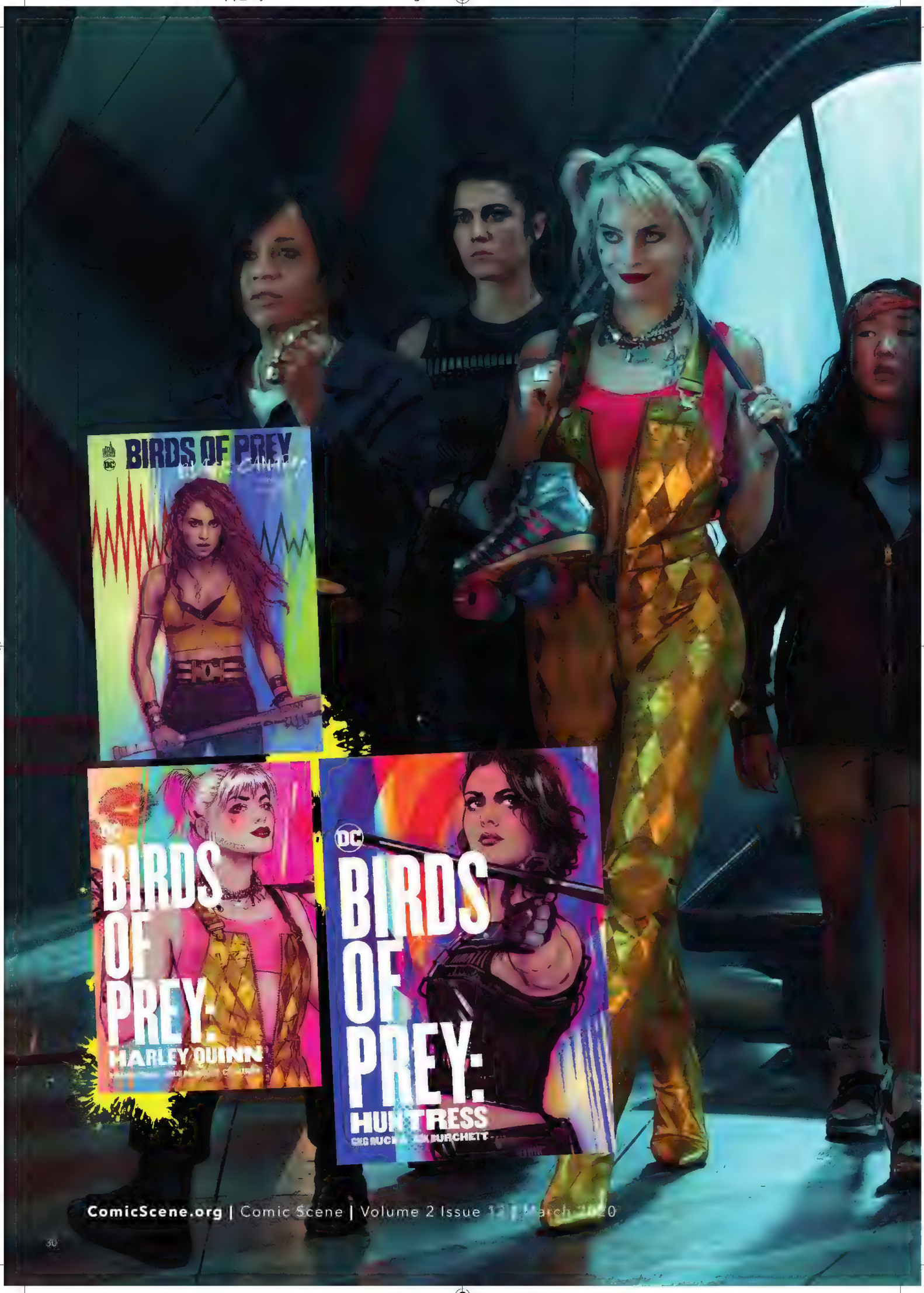
It had to begin somewhere...

Jon Sherlok is the last of The Technofreaks, sole survivor of a flawed commercial enterprise that saw people have implants in their heads that would turn their brains into super-computers. It didn't last. Most went insane. Others weren't so lucky.

Maurice is loyal, tenacious, sarcastic, French and extremely dangerous in a fight. He is addicted to Munchy Chunks and has a taste for exotic cocktails.

Neville Brady is another of future London's private eyes. He and Jon Sherlok have a long-standing rivalry, both getting things done but in very different ways. Neville is a no-nonsense hard man, who uses his fists rather than his brains to get things done.

The other major player in Jon Sherlok's world is **Loretta Youth**. Loretta models herself on sultry Hollywood starlets of the 30s and 40s. She is a classic Femme Fatale, very sexy, very dangerous

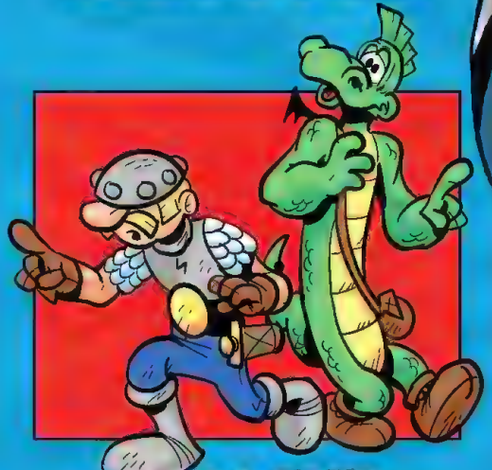

BIRDS OF PREY
BIRDS OF PREY: HARLEY QUINN
DC
BIRDS OF PREY: HUNTRESS

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 10:28 Page 31

COMICSCENE PRESENTS

CORKER!

THE WERE LEVIATHAN



GALLANT & AMOS

WHACKOMAN

ALL AGES PULL OUT COMIC

ISSUE 3

MEGATOMIC BATTLE RABBIT

FANTASTIC NEW COMIC STRIPS CONTINUE

CORKER!

We'd love to know what you think. Let us know your favourites and send us your drawings to comicsceneuk@gmail.com ...*Team Corker!*

Whackoman

By Mark Jackson

Megatomic Battle Rabbit

By Lou Perrins & Ivan Hunter

Gallant & Amos

By Nick Barnes

The Were-Leviathan

By Joshua Spiller & Jon Lavoy

EXCALIBUR AUCTIONS

COLLECTABLES, POSTERS & MEMORABILIA

Five sales scheduled for 2020

25/1, 4/4, 20/6, 5/9 & 21/11

020 3633 0913

hello@excaliburauctions.com

SILVER SURFER #4

Sep 2019: Sold £1,300

AVENGERS #4

Sep 2019: Sold £1,200

DAREDEVIL #1

Sep 2019: Sold £800

THUNDERBIRDS 1969

Sep 2019 Sold £2,200

FREE valuations and advice about selling your Comics

AMAZING FANTASY #15

(Pence Copy)

SOLD:

Jan 2019 £14,500

Auctions held at:

The Village Hotel, Elstree WD6 3SB

Contact Us to sell your items in one of our specialist sales

We also hold regular auctions of:

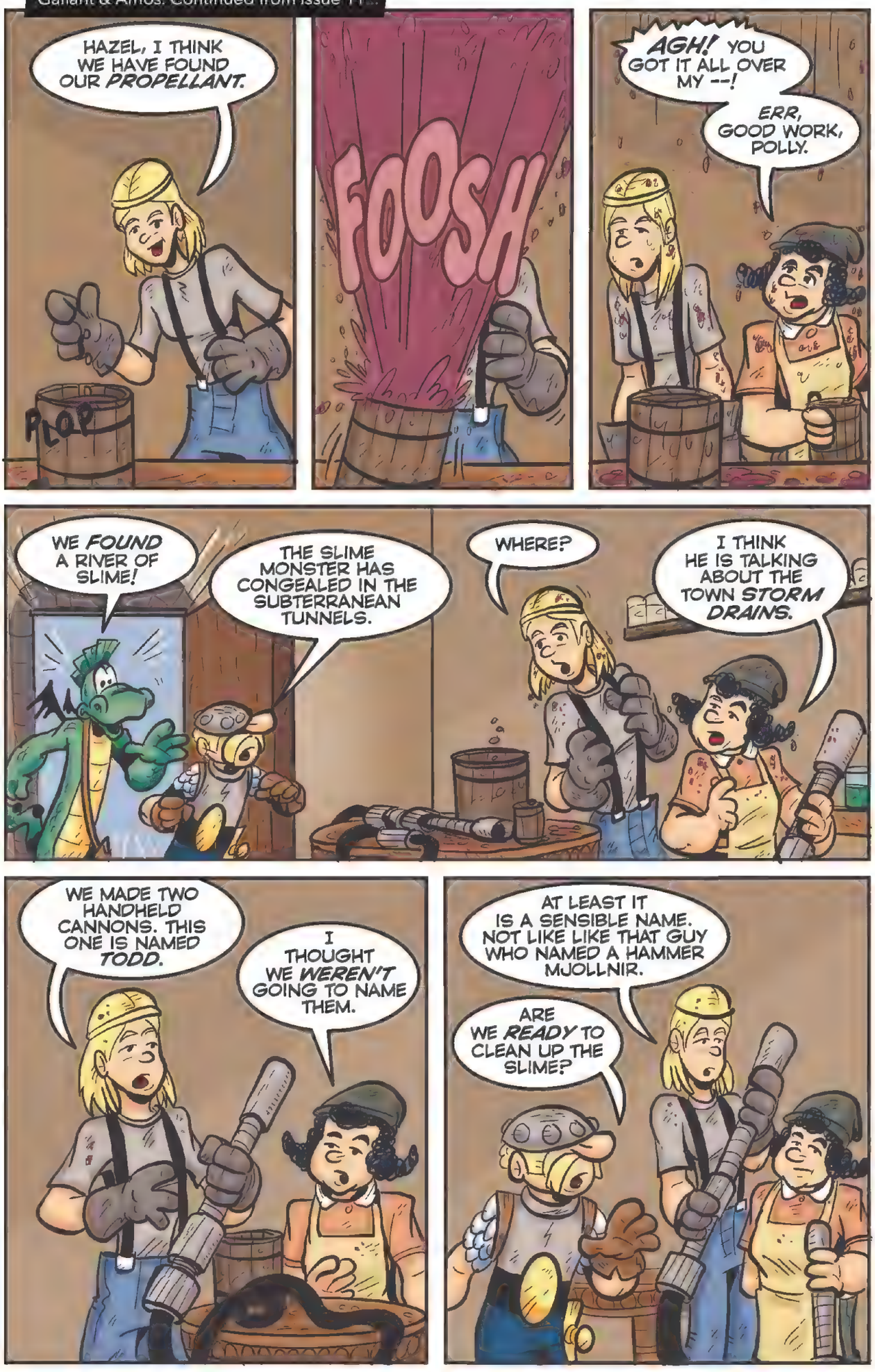
- Movie Memorabilia
- Vintage Posters
- Action Toys and Figures
- Diecast Toys
- Autographs
- Model Railways

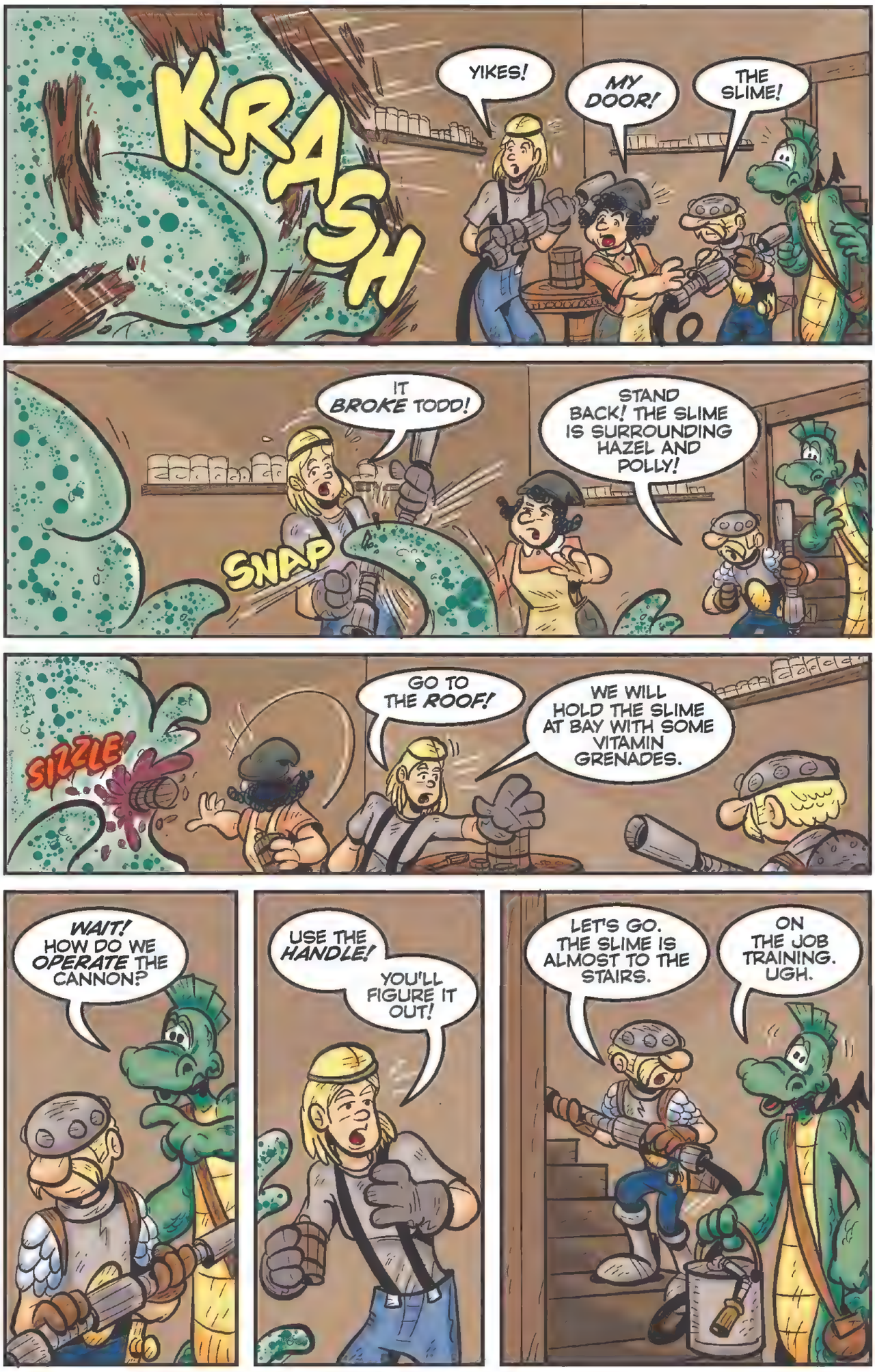
10 Chiltern Business Centre, 63-65 Woodside Road, Amersham HP6 6AA

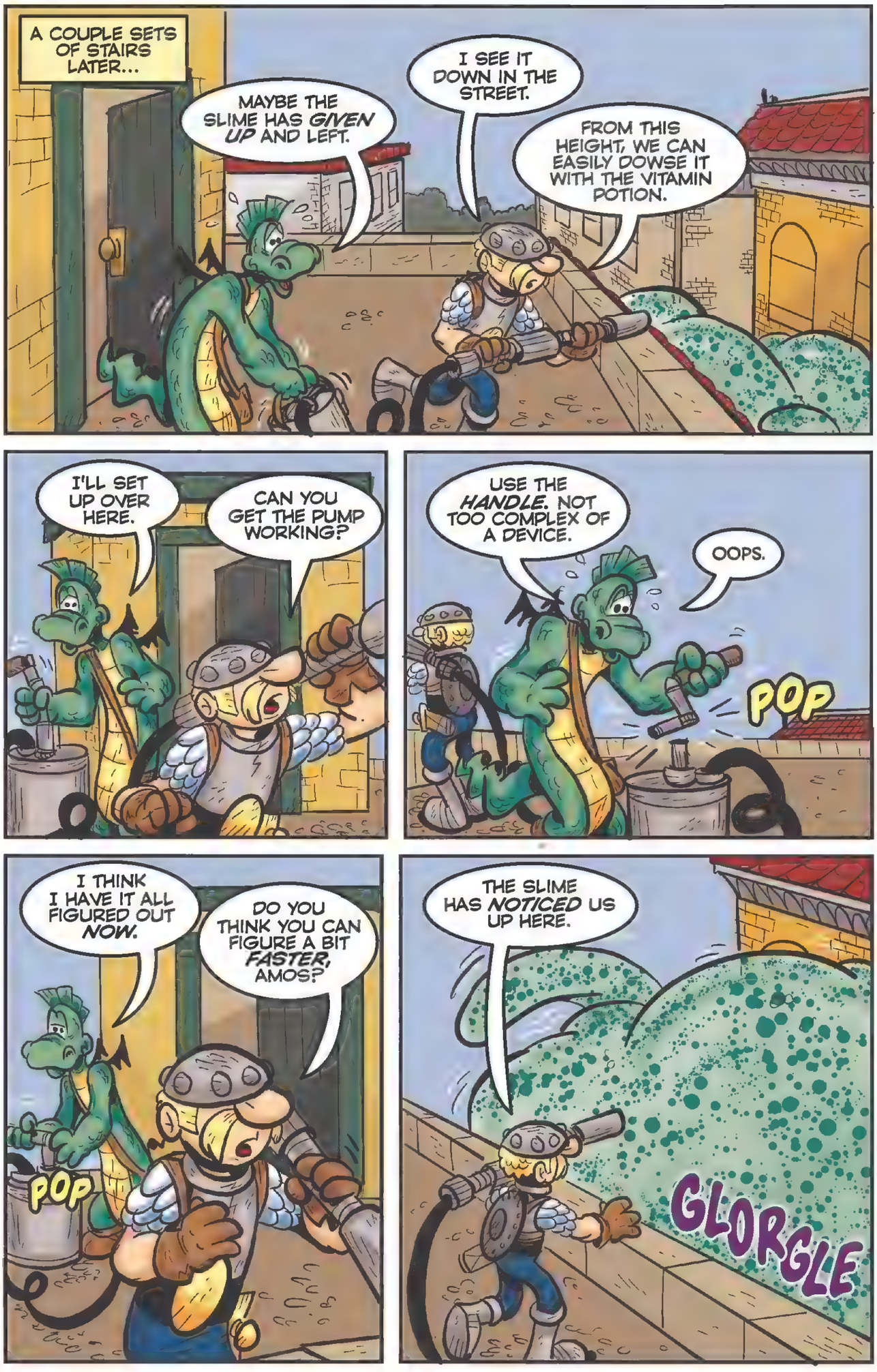
www.excaliburauctions.com

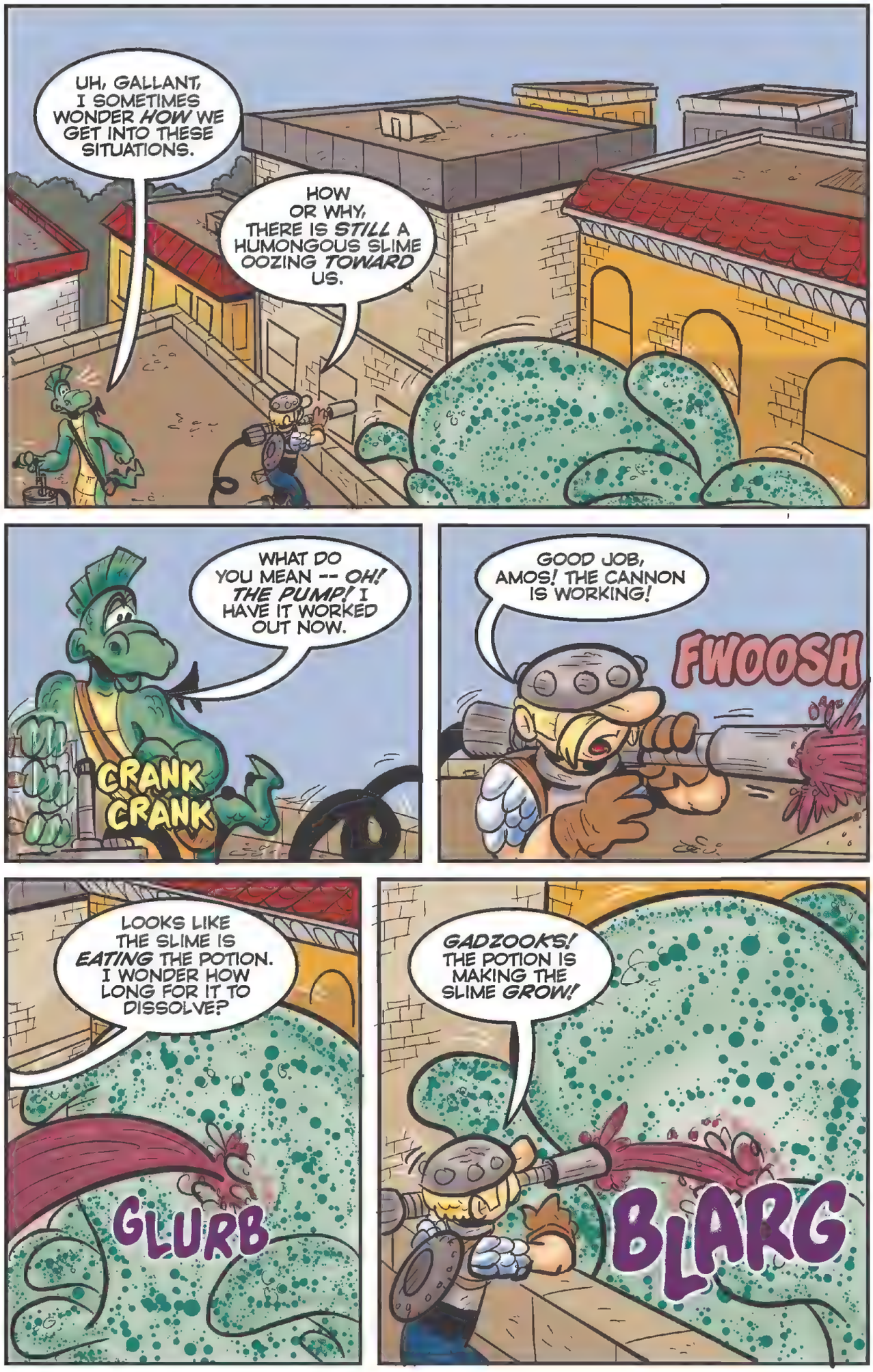
Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:22 Page 33

Gallant & Amos. Continued from Issue 11...

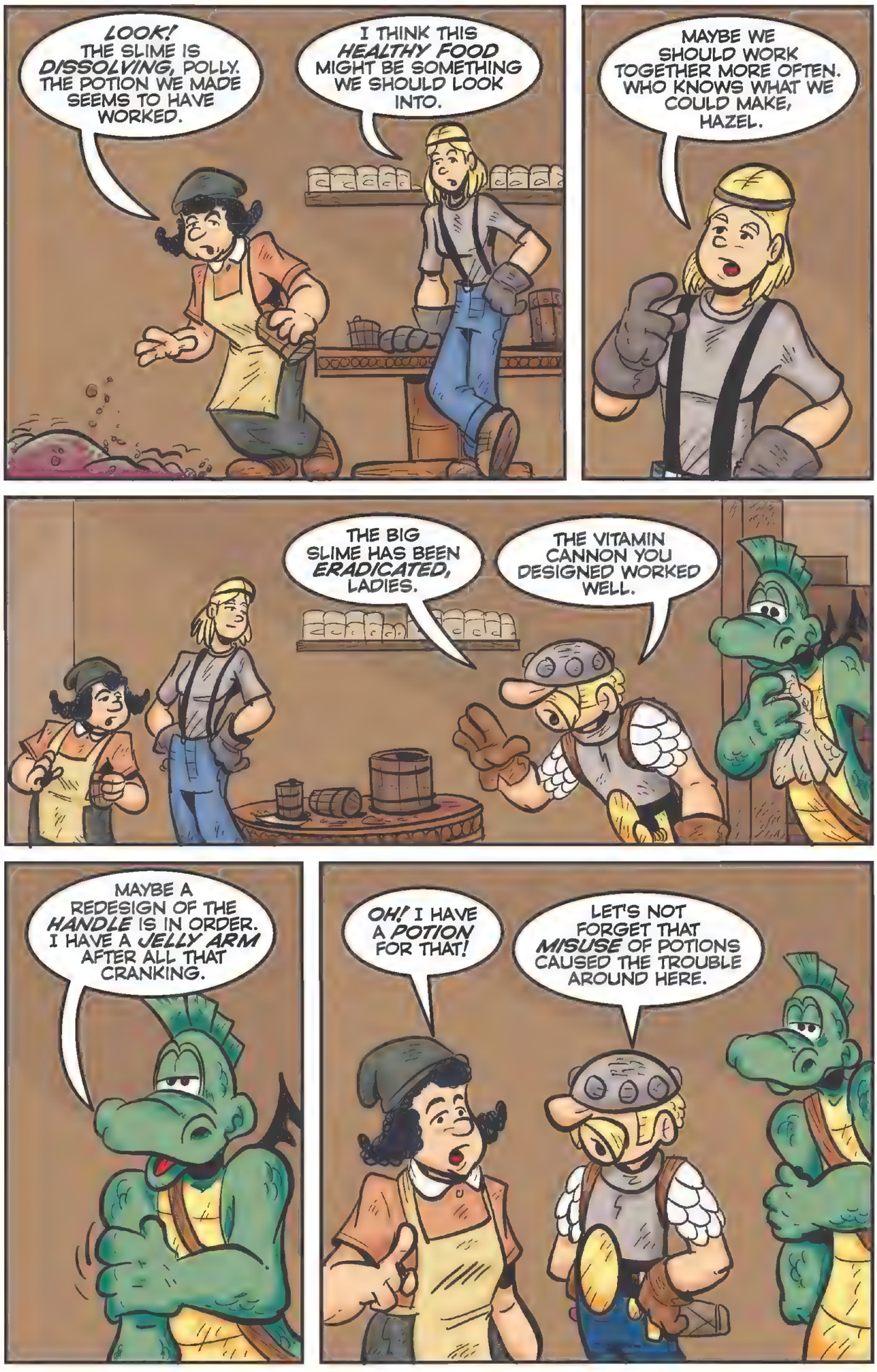

HAZEL, I THINK WE HAVE FOUND OUR PROPELLANT.
PLOP
FOOSH
AGH! YOU GOT IT ALL OVER MY --!
ERR, GOOD WORK, POLLY.
WE FOUND A RIVER OF SLIME!
THE SLIME MONSTER HAS CONGEALED IN THE SUBTERRANEAN TUNNELS.
WHERE?
I THINK HE IS TALKING ABOUT THE TOWN STORM DRAINS.
WE MADE TWO HANDHELD CANNONS. THIS ONE IS NAMED TODD.
I THOUGHT WE WEREN'T GOING TO NAME THEM.
AT LEAST IT IS A SENSIBLE NAME. NOT LIKE LIKE THAT GUY WHO NAMED A HAMMER MJOLLNIR.
ARE WE READY TO CLEAN UP THE SLIME?

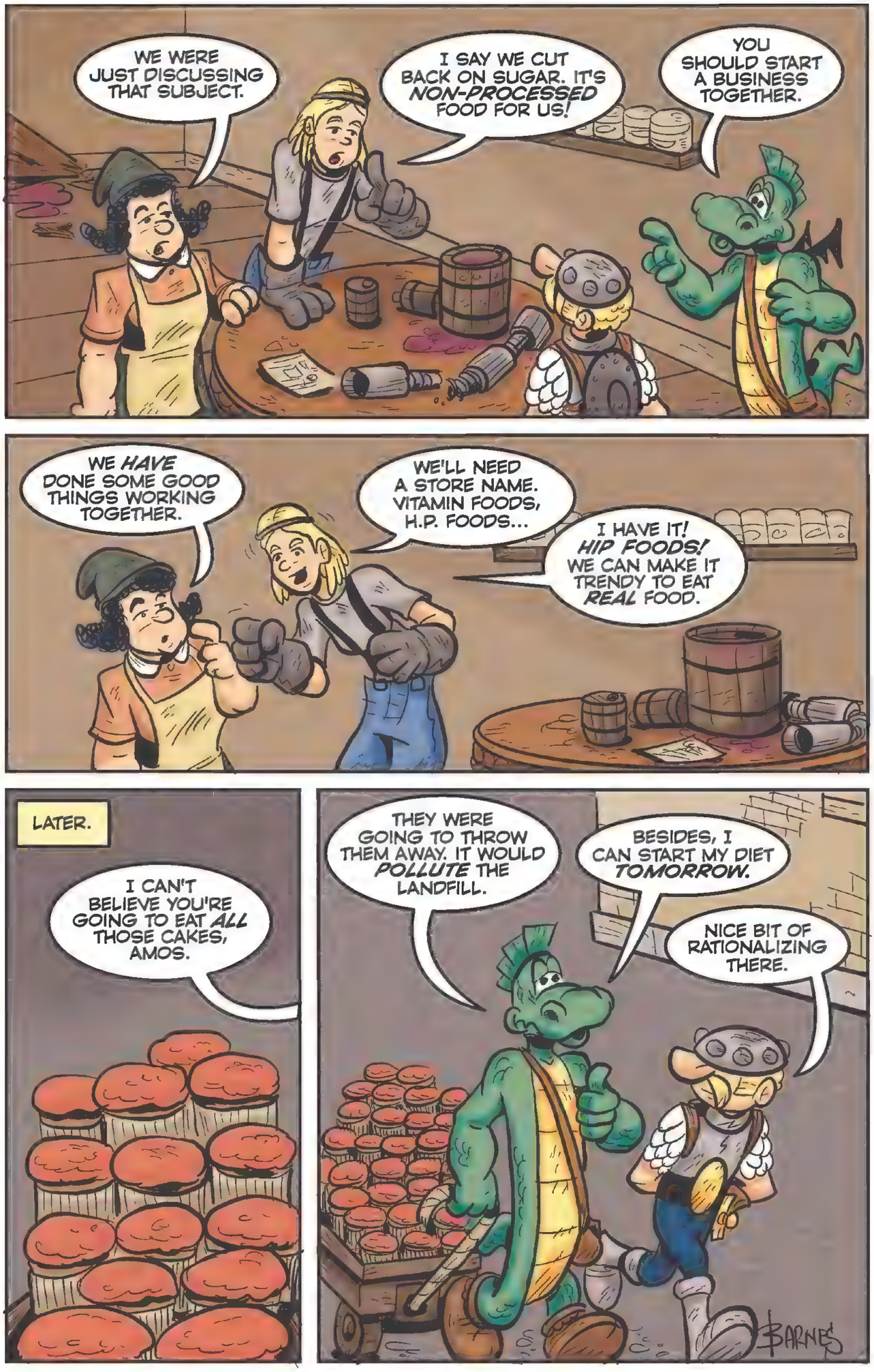

KRASH
YIKES!
MY DOOR!
THE SLIME!
IT BROKE TODD!
SNAP
STAND BACK! THE SLIME IS SURROUNDING HAZEL AND POLLY!
SIZZLE
GO TO THE ROOF!
WE WILL HOLD THE SLIME AT BAY WITH SOME VITAMIN GRENADES.
WAIT! HOW DO WE OPERATE THE CANNON?
USE THE HANDLE!
YOU'LL FIGURE IT OUT!
LET'S GO. THE SLIME IS ALMOST TO THE STAIRS.
ON THE JOB TRAINING. UGH.


A COUPLE SETS OF STAIRS LATER...
MAYBE THE SLIME HAS *GIVEN UP* AND LEFT.
I SEE IT DOWN IN THE STREET.
FROM THIS HEIGHT, WE CAN EASILY DOWSE IT WITH THE VITAMIN POTION.
I'LL SET UP OVER HERE.
CAN YOU GET THE PUMP WORKING?
USE THE *HANDLE*. NOT TOO COMPLEX OF A DEVICE.
OOPS.
POP
I THINK I HAVE IT ALL FIGURED OUT *NOW*.
DO YOU THINK YOU CAN FIGURE A BIT *FASTER*, AMOS?
POP
THE SLIME HAS *NOTICED* US UP HERE.
GLORGLE


UH, GALLANT, I SOMETIMES WONDER *HOW* WE GET INTO THESE SITUATIONS.
HOW OR WHY, THERE IS *STILL* A HUMONGOUS SLIME OOZING *TOWARD* US.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN -- *OH! THE PUMP!* I HAVE IT WORKED OUT NOW.
CRANK
CRANK
GOOD JOB, AMOS! THE CANNON IS WORKING!
FWOOSH
LOOKS LIKE THE SLIME IS *EATING* THE POTION. I WONDER HOW LONG FOR IT TO DISSOLVE?
GLURB
GADZOOKS! THE POTION IS MAKING THE SLIME *GROW!*
BLARG

THAT'S THE END OF THE POTION, GALLANT.
NOT GOOD.
GLURGLE
BLURP
THIS IS THE ONLY TIME YOU'LL HEAR ME WANT TO GET INTO A BARREL OF WATER.


LOOK! THE SLIME IS DISSOLVING, POLLY. THE POTION WE MADE SEEMS TO HAVE WORKED.
I THINK THIS HEALTHY FOOD MIGHT BE SOMETHING WE SHOULD LOOK INTO.
MAYBE WE SHOULD WORK TOGETHER MORE OFTEN. WHO KNOWS WHAT WE COULD MAKE, HAZEL.
THE BIG SLIME HAS BEEN ERADICATED, LADIES.
THE VITAMIN CANNON YOU DESIGNED WORKED WELL.
MAYBE A REDESIGN OF THE HANDLE IS IN ORDER. I HAVE A JELLY ARM AFTER ALL THAT CRANKING.
OH! I HAVE A POTION FOR THAT!
LET'S NOT FORGET THAT MISUSE OF POTIONS CAUSED THE TROUBLE AROUND HERE.


WE WERE JUST DISCUSSING THAT SUBJECT.
I SAY WE CUT BACK ON SUGAR. IT'S NON-PROCESSED FOOD FOR US!
YOU SHOULD START A BUSINESS TOGETHER.
WE HAVE DONE SOME GOOD THINGS WORKING TOGETHER.
WE'LL NEED A STORE NAME. VITAMIN FOODS, H.P. FOODS...
I HAVE IT! HIP FOODS! WE CAN MAKE IT TRENDY TO EAT REAL FOOD.
LATER.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE GOING TO EAT ALL THOSE CAKES, AMOS.
THEY WERE GOING TO THROW THEM AWAY. IT WOULD POLLUTE THE LANDFILL.
BESIDES, I CAN START MY DIET TOMORROW.
NICE BIT OF RATIONALIZING THERE.
BARNES

Why I Love Comics... By Mike Powell

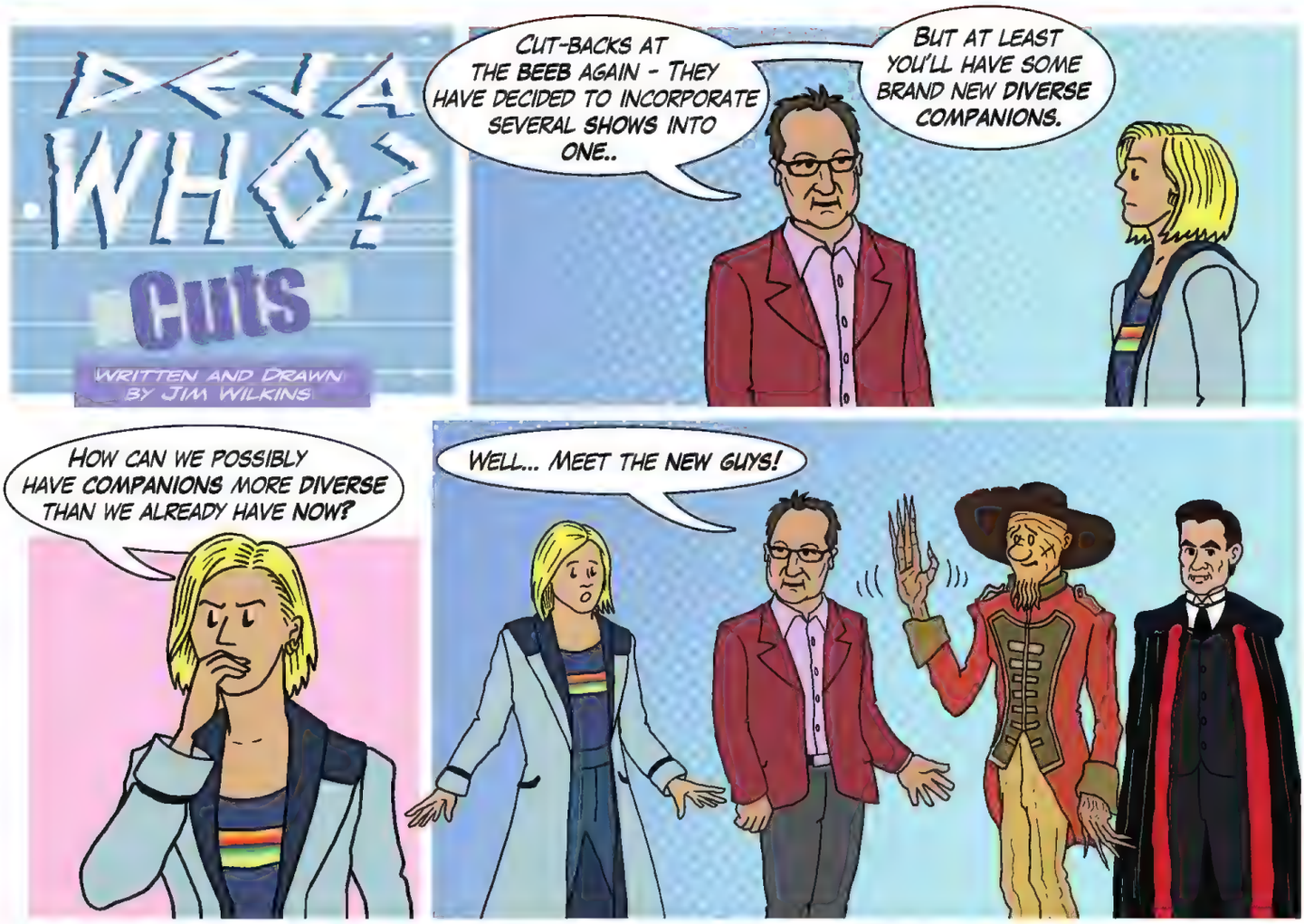
When I think about it I can't remember a time when I didn't love comics. I suppose the real light bulb moment for me was finding Marvel UK's Star Wars Weekly the day after I first saw the film on it's original release. I was hooked straight away. Those early Marvel issues also featured a fantastic selection of back-up material. Within a few months of the tender age of 8 I was familiar with the work of Stan Lee, Steve Ditko, Jack Kirby, Jim Starlin, Howard Chaykin and Michael Golden and I was thirsty for more. Spider-Man Weekly came next, then Marvel Superheroes with Moore and Davis' Captain Britain. That led to Eagle, 2000AD, Warrior, Crisis and Deadline and the American books. I devoured Miller's Daredevil, Simonson's Thor, Swamp Thing, Watchmen and The Dark Knight Returns. Before long it was Sandman, Alpha Centauri, Love and Rockets and Eightball.

I'd joined a number of comic themed Facebook groups but none were quite what I was looking for. They were either limited to specific publishers, characters or time periods but this didn't seem to make sense to me. It was all about Kirby's Fantastic Four but not Kirby's Challengers of the Unknown, Devil Dinosaur was ok but Devil Dinosaur and Moon Girl was out of time! There seemed a bit only so last year I set up my own group called "Why I Love Comics?" I invited a few friends to join and started off with about 20 members. I'd enjoyed that many years in various past pages on Facebook and so I invited some to join. The incredible thing was they did. By the end of the first week I'd had a request from Bill Sienkiewicz to join and Mark Miller had retweeted a post I'd put on Twitter about the group which really started the ball rolling. We had arrived!

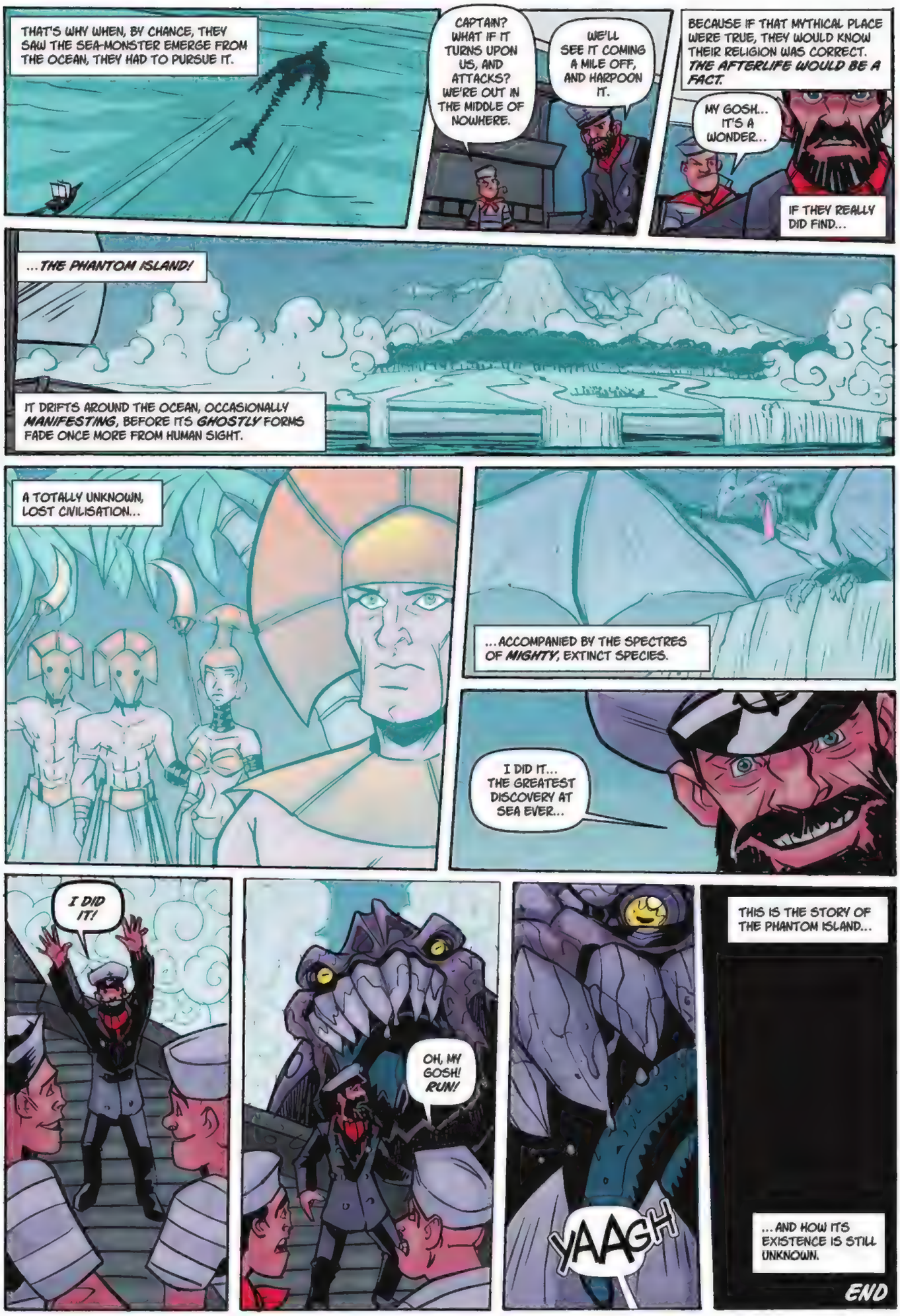
As a life long fan I'm still amazed at the amount of pros we've got as members including teams who have worked on my favourite books. From 2000AD we have John Wagner, Pat Mills, Cliff Robinson, Ross Cook, Steve Yeowell, Glenn Fabry, David Pugh, Mindy Newell, Alan Hebden, John Higgins and Colin Mclaren. From Spider-Man we've got the dream team of Tom DeFalco and Ron Frenz. You name them they're members: Tom Grummett, Jason Sharp, Kelley Jones, Philip Bond, P Craig Russell, Mike Carlin, Jo Duffy, Joe Bennett, Keith Giffen, Tom Sosoh, Don McGregor, Stephen Roberts, Rick Veitch, Emil Frimo... A number of big names from the comics' media have joined us including Richard Johnson (Bleeding Cool), John Freeman (Down the Tubes), Alex Thomas (Popshifter) and some guy named Jonathan Ross.

I also wrote comics you might have read "The Dummy" in Comic Scene issue 51. A number of creators that I've worked with such as Phil Elliott, Andrew Pettinwell and Sarah Millman are also members. It's great being part of a creative community where all of a sudden I'm having a chat with David Lloyd about V for Vendetta, Bill Sienkiewicz about New Mutants or Rob Liefeld about his runs on Spider-Man and Cyberforce. Mostly though it's a place for fans to talk about comics, any publisher, any period and no agenda. We think we're the friendliest group on Facebook.

Why not pop by and see for yourself?


DEJA WHO?
Cuts
WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY JIM WILKINS
CUT-BACKS AT THE BEEB AGAIN - THEY HAVE DECIDED TO INCORPORATE SEVERAL SHOWS INTO ONE..
BUT AT LEAST YOU'LL HAVE SOME BRAND NEW DIVERSE COMPANIONS.
HOW CAN WE POSSIBLY HAVE COMPANIONS MORE DIVERSE THAN WE ALREADY HAVE NOW?
WELL... MEET THE NEW GUYS!

THIS IS NOT THE STORY OF THIS WEREWOLF.
BUT IT BEGINS HERE...
GET HIM!
...WITH A FALL INTO THE OCEAN.
STRUGGLING TO STAY AFLOAT...
...IT SINKS...
...AND, AS THE BESTIAL SIDE TOOK OVER - CLOSE TO DEATH AND IN WILD DESPERATION - IT BIT.
THE WERE-LEVIATHAN
STORY: JOSHUA SPILLER ART: JIM LAVERY
COLOUR: AWOSA TOMIC LETTERS: BOLT-01
QUICK, TO THE SHIP! AFTER IT!
THE LEVIATHAN'S BLOOD WAS MORE RESISTANT TO THE WEREWOLF'S BITE THAN MANY CREATURES'. THAT'S WHY ITS TRANSFORMATION WAS ONLY HALF-COMPLETE.
BUT THERE'S ONE PLACE WHERE ALL MOON-INFECTED ENTITIES YEARN TO GO. IT'S WHY THE WEREWOLF SNARLS WHEN IT'S TRAPPED ON LAND.
THE ISLANDERS KNEW THAT.


THAT'S WHY WHEN, BY CHANCE, THEY SAW THE SEA-MONSTER EMERGE FROM THE OCEAN, THEY HAD TO PURSUE IT.
CAPTAIN? WHAT IF IT TURNS UPON US, AND ATTACKS? WE'RE OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE.
WE'LL SEE IT COMING A MILE OFF, AND HARPOON IT.
BECAUSE IF THAT MYTHICAL PLACE WERE TRUE, THEY WOULD KNOW THEIR RELIGION WAS CORRECT. THE AFTERLIFE WOULD BE A FACT.
MY GOSH... IT'S A WONDER...
IF THEY REALLY DID FIND...
...THE PHANTOM ISLAND!
IT DRIFTS AROUND THE OCEAN, OCCASIONALLY MANIFESTING, BEFORE ITS GHOSTLY FORMS FADE ONCE MORE FROM HUMAN SIGHT.
A TOTALLY UNKNOWN, LOST CIVILISATION...
...ACCOMPANIED BY THE SPECTRES OF MIGHTY, EXTINCT SPECIES.
I DID IT... THE GREATEST DISCOVERY AT SEA EVER...
I DID IT!
OH, MY GOSH! RUN!
YAAGH
THIS IS THE STORY OF THE PHANTOM ISLAND...
...AND HOW ITS EXISTENCE IS STILL UNKNOWN.
END

WHACKOMAN!

BY MARC JACKSON

WHACKOMAN HAS LOST HIS SIDEKICK BUGSY TO A FATE WORSE THAN DEATH. SWALLOWED BY A FEARSOME BEAST, OUR HERO PONDERS HIS PREDICAMENT...

YE GADS! BUGSY IS NO MORE! ONCE AGAIN, I AM WITHOUT A SIDEKICK!
IT'S LIKE LOSING A LIMB, OR ONES' HOUSE KEYS!
I 'COULD' PRIZE THE JAWS OF THIS RASCAL OPEN, BUT MAYBE THIS IS MEANT TO BE. BUGSY WAS ALWAYS A BIT OF A WET LETTUCE!
GRRR
HARK, MORTAL!
I BRING NEWS OF A CROSS-TIME CATASTROPHE!!
COR BLIMEY, GUVNA! WHO ARE YOU?
I AM DR LA FONQUE!
I COME FROM A PLACE THAT HAS YET TO HAPPEN...
OOOOOOH 'FONQY'
SHHHH... THERE IS NO TIME FOR EARTH-HUMOUR!
YOU MUST COME WITH ME NOW, WHACKO MAN... WE SHALL ENTER THE FUTURE, TO SAVE THE PAST!
YOU'RE BLOWING MY MIND DARLING! COLOUR ME INTRIGUED!
TO JOURNEY WITH ME, YOU MUST CLEAR YOUR MIND.
EMPTY YOUR BRAIN, REMOVE ANY THOUGHTS OF NOW, THEN OR WHEN! CAN YOU DO THAT, PUNY MAN?
DONE! LET'S DO THIS!!
ZERO!
MORE NEXT TIME!

©COPYRIGHT 2020 MARC JACKSON AND WEIRDO COMICS #17

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:22 Page 44

DUDLEY DEXTER WATKINS

Last year marked the 50th anniversary of the death, at 62, of the talented British comic strip artist and illustrator Dudley Dexter Watkins. While you might not know his name, you will almost certainly know his work. An artist of consummate skill who pioneered a new style of children's cartoons over a long, illustrious career, Watkins' versatile pen and paintbrush brought us an extraordinary range of cartoon and adventure pages in newspapers and comics and their appeal endures. Famous for his Oor Wullie and The Broons scripts in The Sunday Post, Watkins worked on comics including The Dandy, The Beano, The Topper, and The Beezer from their launch, creating characters such as Desperate Dan, Lord Snooty, Mickey the Monkey, and Ginger, drawn weekly to the delight of generations of youngsters across the country.

Born in Prestwich, Greater Manchester, on 27 February 1907, Dudley, the eldest of three children, was raised and educated in Nottingham, where the Watkins family relocated when Dudley was a few months old. He was a gifted artist from a young age, and drew praise for his early drawings, some of which were exhibited at Nottingham Castle. With the support and encouragement of his father, James, a lithograph artist, Dudley studied at the Nottingham School of Art, nurturing his talent, and in the early 1920s began working for the pharmacy retailer Boots in the window display department. Watkins' artwork was published for the first time in The Beacon, the company magazine.

Moving from Nottingham to Scotland, in 1925, after a year of further study at the Glasgow School of Art, Watkins began work at D.C. Thomson as a staff artist. Initially offered a short-term contract, his eventual career with the Dundee-based publisher spanned five decades and saw the creation of some of Britain's most beloved and iconic cartoon characters. During his first decade with the company, Watkins provided black and white illustrations for stories in boys' weekly action papers Adventure, The Rover, The Wizard, The Skipper, and The Hotspur, Thomson's so-called Big Five.

Started by R.D. Low, head of Thomson's children's publication department, the Big Five titles also pioneered the comic strip design and layout, in part an attempt to challenge the market dominance of rival comics, such as Comic Cuts, from Amalgamated Press. Watkins contributed comic strips to small format supplements, or Midget Comics, that were given away with some of these publications. In March 1936 Thomson produced a newly conceived eight-page comic supplement to The

"WATKINS' VERSATILE PEN AND PAINTBRUSH BROUGHT US AN EXTRAORDINARY RANGE OF CARTOON AND ADVENTURE PAGES IN NEWSPAPERS AND COMICS AND THEIR APPEAL ENDURES"

Sunday Post, "The Fun Section," for which Watkins, along with Low, created Oor Wullie, a cheeky boy in dungarees, and The Broons, a traditional working-class Scottish family. Written in Scots vernacular, these strips, and their timeless characters, have appeared every week in The Sunday Post for over 80 years.

The success of the Fun Section's comic strips paved the way for the launch of The Dandy in December 1937 and The Beano in July 1938. Watkins was the lead artist for both national weekly titles, which were aimed at boys and girls, illustrating Desperate Dan, Smarty Grandpa, and Our Gang, a two-page picture story based on a popular series of American comedy short films, for The Dandy, and Lord Snooty for The Beano. Watkins' Biffo the Bear, also for The Beano, debuted on the front cover in 1948. As well as these – and other – comic features, Watkins drew a number of memorable adventure strips, including Danny Longlegs and Wild Young Dirky for The Dandy, and The Shipwrecked Circus and Jack Flash, for The Beano.

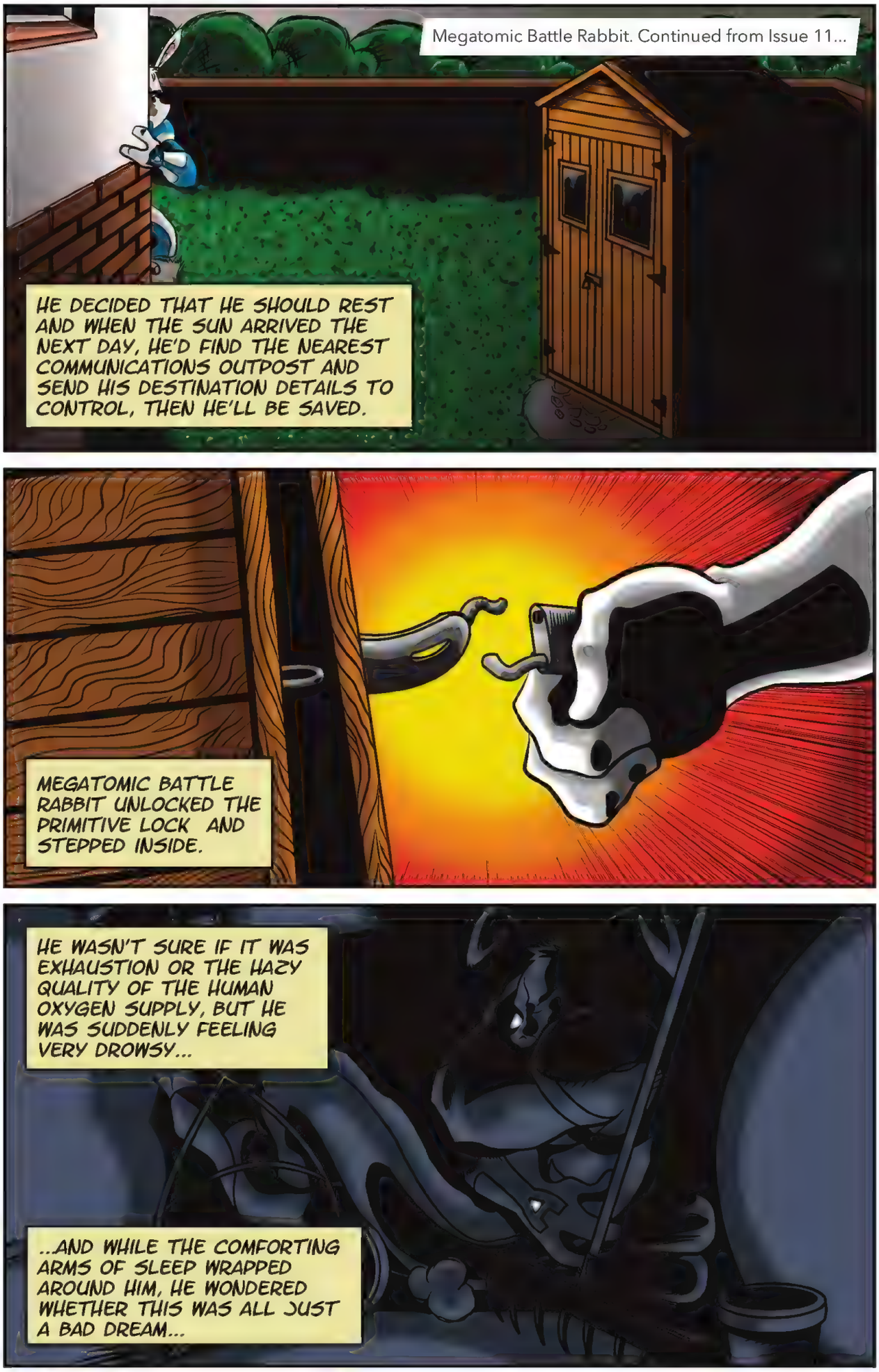
During World War II, The Dandy and The Beano, alongside other Thomson publications, featured wartime propaganda, often lampooning Nazi and Fascist leaders. Desperate Dan and Lord Snooty thwarted the enemy with their strength and inventiveness respectively, boosting morale on the home front. Patriotic advertisements began appearing regularly too, urging readers to gather or recycle scarce materials and stop wasteful consumption. Surreal adventure stories, such as The Beano's Tom Thumb and Jimmy and his Magic Patch, also from the pen of Watkins, propelled children to locations far away from the realities of wartime Britain. Crucial to the Thomson firm, Watkins, whose distinctive, lively style of drawing and shading had come to define the look of their portfolio of comics, was exempted from active military service and spent the duration of the conflict as a war reserve constable in Kincardine, Fife.

In 1946 Watkins began signing and initialling his work, one of only two Thomson comic artists permitted to do so (the other, Allan Morley, like Watkins, joined Thomson's in 1925). By the end of the decade, Watkins had completed illustrations for adaptations of classic novels, among them Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island (1883) and Kidnapped (1886), for the People's Journal, a popular Thomson's serial. These were later reprinted in book form as part of Thomson's "Told in Pictures" series.

Continuing his remarkable output, when the broadsheet-sized Topper and Beezer comics launched in the 1950s, Watkins was tasked with illustrating the front cover strips for both titles, introducing Mickey the Monkey and Ginger to comic fans. Devoutly Christian, Watkins attended the Church of Christ in Dundee with his wife, Doris, where he often delivered talks on religion and led Bible discussions with children. From 1956 he also penned comic strips William the Warrior and Tony and Tina for Young Warrior, a monthly Christian children's paper published and distributed by the Worldwide Evangelisation Crusade. A long held ambition to produce an illustrated Bible was never fulfilled. Watkins died unexpectedly from a heart attack while at his drawing board on 20 August 1969. Following his sudden death, Thomson's remained faithful to Watkins' comic characters, reprinting his earlier strips, often for several years, maintaining issue-to-issue continuity, until replacement artists were found.

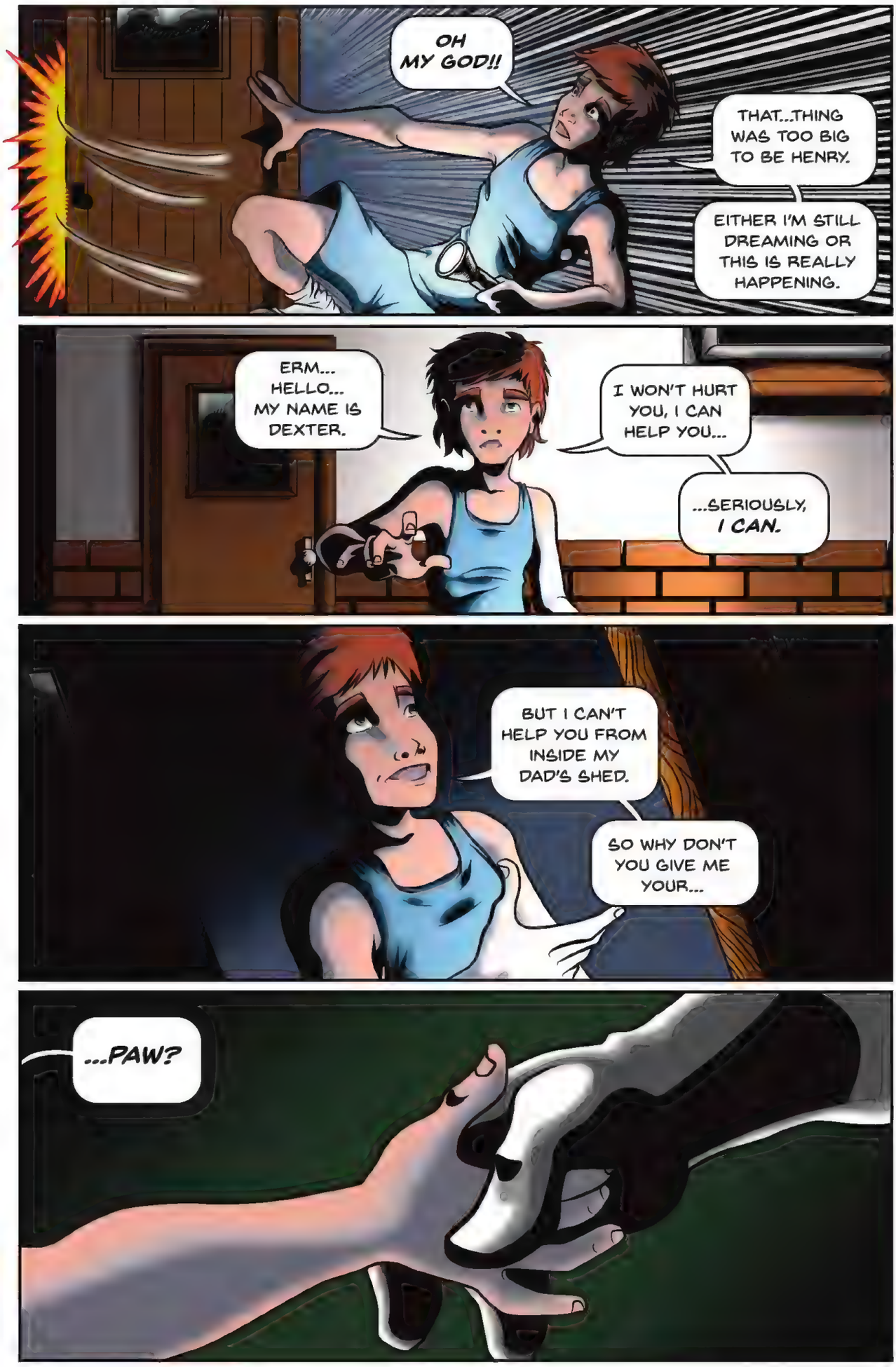
Watkins' work remains influential, and is still appreciated by fans, artists, and collectors. Recent retrospective collections and facsimile reproductions of his comic art and illustrations have been a commercial success, not least because the Watkins 'brand,' carefully selected from the Thomson archival storehouse of artistic creation, effortlessly taps into memories of childhood and nostalgia for the past. Consequently, Watkins, who is honoured with a Historic Scotland commemorative plaque on the wall of his former home, Winsterley, in Broughty Ferry, near Dundee, has become more famous 50 years after his death than he ever had been in life.

Author: David Anderson


Megatomic Battle Rabbit. Continued from Issue 11...
HE DECIDED THAT HE SHOULD REST AND WHEN THE SUN ARRIVED THE NEXT DAY, HE'D FIND THE NEAREST COMMUNICATIONS OUTPOST AND SEND HIS DESTINATION DETAILS TO CONTROL, THEN HE'LL BE SAVED.
MEGATOMIC BATTLE RABBIT UNLOCKED THE PRIMITIVE LOCK AND STEPPED INSIDE.
HE WASN'T SURE IF IT WAS EXHAUSTION OR THE HAZY QUALITY OF THE HUMAN OXYGEN SUPPLY, BUT HE WAS SUDDENLY FEELING VERY DROWSY...
...AND WHILE THE COMFORTING ARMS OF SLEEP WRAPPED AROUND HIM, HE WONDERED WHETHER THIS WAS ALL JUST A BAD DREAM...

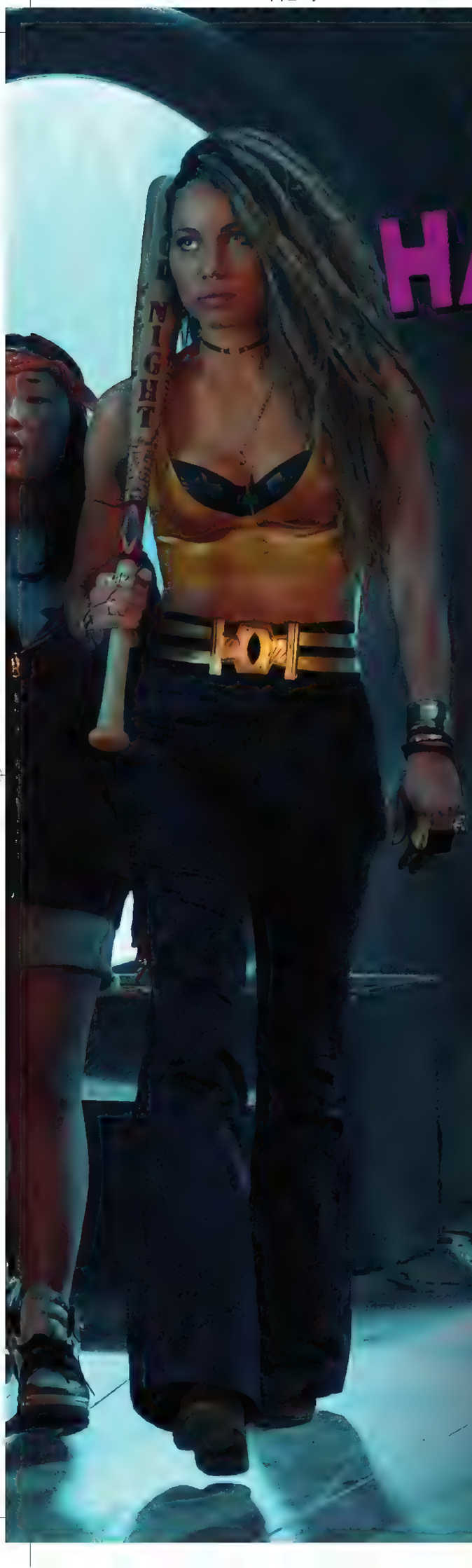
KLUNK!
?
WHAT WAS THAT?
<GASP>
THE BLUE FLASHING LIGHT!
I'D BETTER TAKE A TORCH WITH ME, JUST SO IT KNOWS I'M NOT A THREAT.

OH MAN! NO ONE'S HERE...
WAIT, IT COULD BE HIDING IN THE SHED...
ERM... HELLO!? ANYONE IN THERE?
RIGHT.... OK, DON'T PANIC...
I'M COMING IN.
I COME IN PEACE...
THIS BETTER NOT BE YOU SCRWEWING AROUND, HENRY.
?


OH MY GOD!!
THAT...THING WAS TOO BIG TO BE HENRY.
EITHER I'M STILL DREAMING OR THIS IS REALLY HAPPENING.
ERM... HELLO... MY NAME IS DEXTER.
I WON'T HURT YOU, I CAN HELP YOU...
...SERIOUSLY, I CAN.
BUT I CAN'T HELP YOU FROM INSIDE MY DAD'S SHED.
SO WHY DON'T YOU GIVE ME YOUR...
...PAW?

SO... YOU'RE NOT FROM AROUND HERE THEN?

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:23 Page 51



INTRODUCING HARLEY QUINN

Harley Quinn arrives front and centre in the movie 'Birds of Prey' this month following an explosive celluloid debut in 'Suicide Squad'. The character is on a par with many of the classic Batman villains, despite being 50 years younger than most of them. She also didn't originate in the Batman DC Comics line either – she first entertained us as light relief sidekick to the Joker in Paul Dini and Bruce Timm's Batman Animated Series in 1992. Well, deadly light relief!

Harley's actual comic debut came a year later in 1993 in the 'Batman Adventures' She made many cameo appearances in the Batman titles before landing her first comic in 2003. Fleshing out her background we were introduced to Dr Harleen Quinzel, a promising psychologist who became obsessed with her patient, the Joker. Her love for the Clown Prince of Crime inspired Harleen to adopt a new identity as his sidekick-slash-love interest – whether he wanted one or not!

In 2013 Harley had a hot comic series thanks to Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti, taking her away from the backdrop of the Batman and Joker's Gotham City to Coney Island, as part of the new 52 series. Her comics were rebooted again in 2016 as part of DC Comics Rebirth. In 2017, to celebrate 25 years of Harley Quinn, she not only appeared but took over almost all of the DC titles. More recently Harley's appeal has translated into the DC Comics new Black Label titles, showing the character can work in kid friendly comics and those aimed at the more adult market. Little wonder that the versatility of the career and appeal to comic fans makes her a fan favourite for the cosplayer community as well as movie makers. A bankable comic character on a par with Batman, Superman, Wonder Woman and the Joker.

So here we are, 30 years later, with several comic titles and, going full circle, a return to her animated roots. In 2019 the Harley Quinn animated series was born, coming to the E4 in the UK soon. Prior to that Margot Robbie was our first live action movie Harley in 'Suicide Squad'. A stand out performance Margot reprises the role in 'Birds of Prey and the Fabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn'.

The twisted story is told by Harley herself, as only Harley can tell it. Villains Roman Sionis and his right hand Zsasz put a target on a young girl named Cass and Gotham is turned upside down looking for her. Harley and fellow DC 'Birds of Prey' Huntress, Black Canary and Renee Montoya collide and as an unlikely team have no choice but to team up and take Roman down. Expected to do good business its one of the first comic movies of 2020 out of the blocks. Catch it in cinemas now!

ACTION 2020

MAYHEM!

The glam rock group Sweet sang in 1976 in the song **'Action':-**

" Everybody wants a piece of the action

Everybody needs a main attraction

I've got what everybody needs

Satisfaction guaranteed

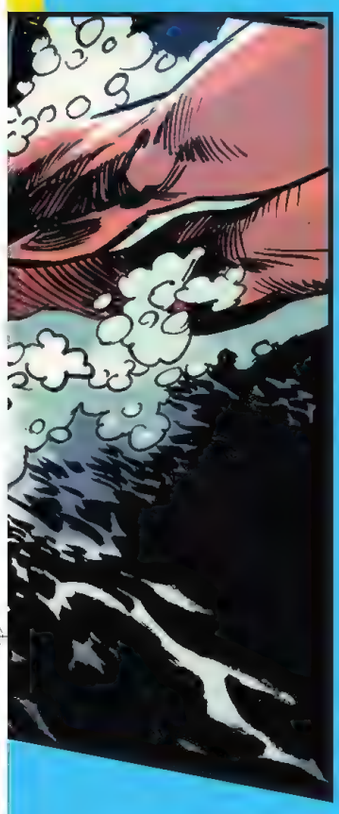
Everybody wants a piece of the action..."

Did these lyrics ring true for for the release of Action comic in the same year of 1976? The first issue was published on February 7th 1976 by IPC, full name International Publishing Corporation who hired Editor Pat Mills for the launch. The aim of the comic was to be hard hitting and to reflect the political and social upheavals of the mid Seventies. It's target readership was clearly aimed at working class teenage boys and to wet their appetite promotional ads in other IPC comics like 'Buster' stated 'You've never seen stories like these before.'Which was very true if you hadn't been able to sneak into X rated movies at the time as the stories in the comic blatantly ripped off the most popular films of the period.

The comic was a huge success and the kids loved it but what a kerfuffle it made with the older population. The Mary Whitehouse brigade choked on their crustless cucumber and tuna sarnies while viewing the content with abject horror. The Sun newspaper which obviously was a leading exponent of the moral compass with it's page three bosom count had this to say about the publication:- 'A giant shark snaps off a man's head in one crimson-splashed chomp. Then it tears apart another victim, limb from trunk. An international diplomat dissolves in agony as sulphuric acid gushes from his bathroom shower. They could be X-certificate, adults-only scenes from a thriller combining the worst violence of Jaws and James Bond. But they are not. These are just two scenes from Action, a lurid new 7p British comic.' It also called it a 'Sevenpenny nightmare.'

So was all this hoohah warranted? Well let's have a closer look at some of the contents and we'll make our own minds up eh! The first ever storyline introduced us to a character called Dredger and to make sure we understood what he was all about the blurb at the top of the page informed us that 'There's only one rule for Dredger- there are no rules!' A plane is hijacked by Arab assassins hellbent on killing a political rival but luckily enough

our Dirty Harry wannabe is on board to thwart their efforts with the classic line 'You're dead, pal! Dead! 'As well as shouting those words he used his gun of course as the baddies would have retorted with 'Sticks and Stones may break my bones but words will never hurt.' So began the Mission Impossible styled adventures of Dredger the ace British secret agent. Not a bad start to the comic in my opinion.



Next up was the wartime exploits of Hellman of Hammer Force. Oh how the kids must have groaned. 'Not another war story, we're sick of them, we can read that stuff in Warlord, Commando, Victor and Valiant.' Don't be so fast to judge young sirs. This story is different from all the other cannon fodder. This is written from the viewpoint of the enemy. Those nasty Germans that your Grandad won't shut up about, how he fought them on the beaches and how he was still doing so except now it was the race for prime beach towel placement in Spain. Yes it was an original concept about a Panzer tank commander who had no allegiance to the Nazi or SS parties and shouted out 'We kill tanks- not men if we can help it.' Ultimately this struck a raw nerve with the readership as 'The panzers crush, the panzers smash, the panzers kill!' It was akin to seeing your favourite footie team get battered 5-0 every week by your most hated rivals and to my knowledge only Middlesbrough fans really know what that feels like. One poor reader was that upset with this unique concept that he wrote in complaining 'How is it that a German can be a hero?' Swiftly moving on then.

BlackJack was loosely based on world champion boxer Mohammed Ali and this character bucked the trend as unlike previous comic book boxing strips the fighter was a black man which reflected the situation in real life as the heavyweight division had been dominated by black men for years previous. Sadly in the mid Seventies the UK was still quite a racist country with tv shows like 'Love Thy Neighbour' and 'Till Death Us Do Part' being some of the popular viewing of the day. I still cringe with embarrassment at the chants that black footballers had to endure at grounds up and down the country without hardly a mention in the press reports of the games. As a youngster in the Sixties I bought a comic called Sparky and the cover character also called Sparky was a young black boy with massive red lips and he wore a grass skirt while living in Scotland where publishers DC Thompson were based. Today we are shocked by such things but I've mentioned it as a reminder of how things were back then to try and put into context what we were being subjected to and influenced by on a daily basis. So having a character like BlackJack was a refreshing change and it was one of my favourite stories as the fighter named Jack Barron had a major dilemma to face up to. After every fight his eyesight was worsening to the extent that a doctor informed him he would go blind if he carried on fighting. So would he stop and save his sight or would he continue in his quest to be world champion?

> "The big star of the comic though was **'Hookjaw' a giant man eating shark** which was obviously based on 'Jaws' that giant baddie from James Bond..."

Another original idea for a comic but not so if you were a fan of The Fugitive on TV was the story of 'The Running Man' where athlete Mike Carter is in New York to run in a 5,000 metres race at Yankee Stadium. While at his hotel he receives a bottle of champagne from a Mr.Scarlatti which explodes on opening and our poor Mike awakens much later in hospital wrapped in bandages and on removing them he is horrified to find out that some numpty doctor has performed plastic surgery on him and given him a completely different face. Things go from bad to worse rapidly when he discovers that he's not in a hospital at all but in a warehouse and when on escaping he soon comes under gunfire from local cops prompting him to think that it's time to run and keep bloody running. Excellent stuff.

The big star of the comic though was 'Hookjaw' a giant man eating shark which was obviously based on 'Jaws' that giant baddie from James Bond played so superbly by Richard Kiel. It was drawn in glorious colour ,mostly red and it didn't hold back with its scenes of decapitation or similar limb shredding carnage. The story was told from the viewpoint of the shark which was indeed an interesting concept at the time. Another story that had the PC brigade spitting blood was the football story 'Look Out For Lefty' as it depicted football hooliganism. The hero's girlfriend chucked a bottle which smashed into the face of an opposing player on the pitch. Was Lefty shocked or horrified by her action? Hardly, as he responds 'Good ole Angie'. The Daily Mail was shocked though and they got in touch with the Football League secretary Alan Hardaker who they quoted as saying:- 'It is really appalling that there are people so brainless as to sell comics to children with stuff like this inside them. The man responsible ought to be hit over the head with a bottle himself.'

Things came to a head when IPC director John Sanders was grilled on Nationwide which was a TV teatime news programme by Frank Bough himself who tore a right old strip off him. A week later and the comic was debated in the House of Commons which ultimately led to the cancellation of the comic. Rumour has it that WH Smith threatened to pull all IPC titles from stock unless Action was axed. So in October of 1976, 200,000 copies of issue no.37 were pulped apart from a few that slipped through the net and now sell

for an absolute fortune. A watered down version of the comic was relaunched in December of the same year but it wasn't the same hard hitting exciting comic and it limped on for nearly a year until November 77 when the 'exciting news inside' issue arrived and the following week it was swallowed up by its big brother 'Battle' comic. Meanwhile earlier in 1977 editor Pat Mills had moved onto pastures new and was working on another comic which was probably more violent, graphic and hard hitting than Action ever was. 2000AD, hmmm, wonder what happened to that one?

I'm pleased to announce some 'Good news inside readers ' myself now as part of Rebellion Publishing's acquisition of the IPC back catalogue will see the release in March 2020 of an Action Comic special. You will be able to judge for yourself if all the carnage and mayhem of the stories warranted the public media criticism. I managed to get in touch with the great man himself, Pat Mills, who kindly answered a few questions for me.

Comic Scene: *Your first writing job was with DC Thompson. Was this a childhood dream fulfilled?*

PM: Yes. Although I'd been trying to break into other markets before and after.

CS: *If not too personal what was your reason for leaving and becoming a freelance writer?*

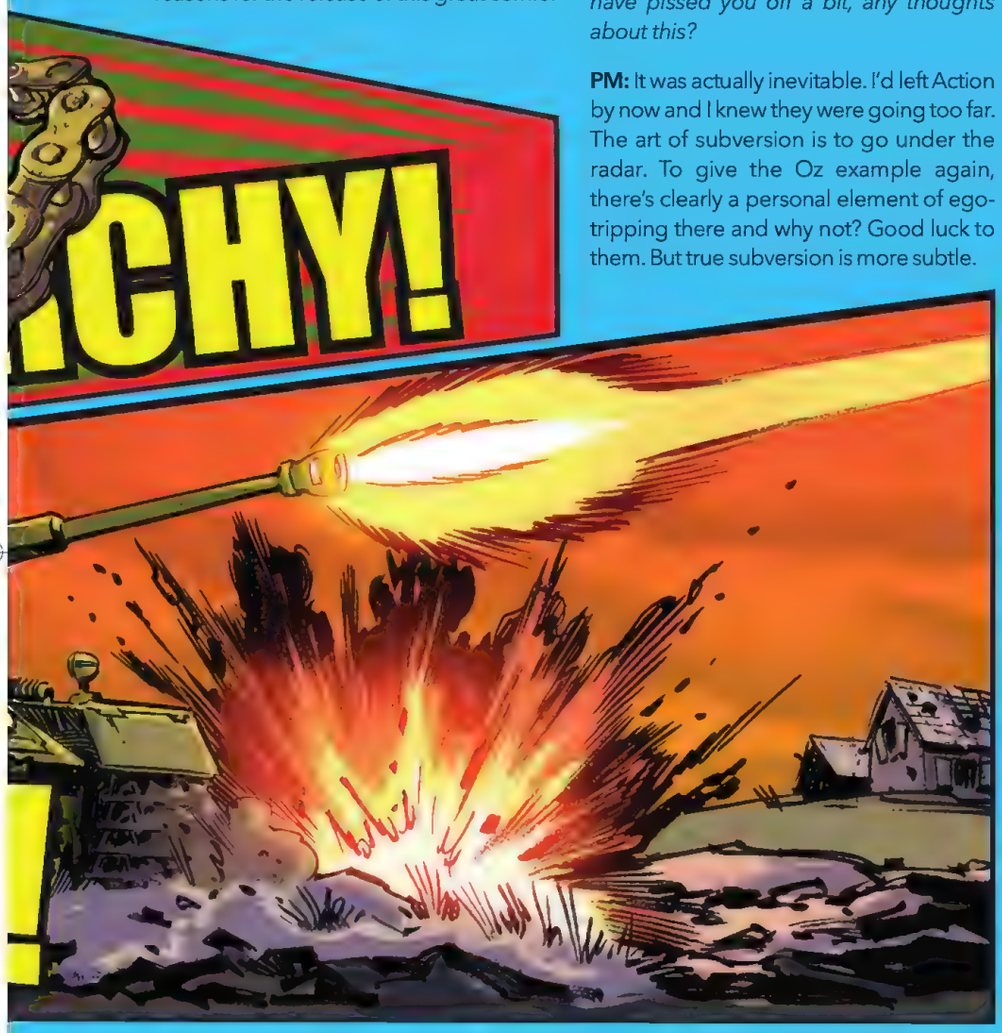
PM: I think many people at DCTs were secretly freelancing elsewhere. Money was an important reason.

CS: *I'd given up reading comics by the time I started senior school in 1970, the main reason being the piss taking that was involved if the other kids found out you were still were reading comics but more importantly for me was that I was bored with the same old outdated stories which to be honest were reprints from the fifties and sixties. In my last year at senior school in 1975 I got into comics again thanks to Battle Picture Weekly. I just loved it, I wasn't a big fan of war stories but these were different, a breath of fresh air. I liked Dawson's War, The Rat Pack and your story about Lofty. My favourite of course was Charley's War, absolute genius. Any thoughts or memories about working on this comic?*

PM: We were trying to say something different and this process continued through Action and 2000AD. Although, on the subject of Charley's War, Im still annoyed that it was a victim of the media blackout on anti-war films and stories during the Centenary Years. Thus it was not featured in the British Library exhibition of radical comics. Why not? Apart from the blackout, because there's an element of

poseur amongst those responsible. CW is too hard hitting even now for the middle classes.

CS: *You've been called The Godfather of British comics. It could so easily have been the Godfather of Punk as prior to that movement you certainly had the establishment spitting out blood with the release of Action. To me every story was amazing, unique and down to earth and it certainly deserved the success it achieved with the youth of the day. What were your reasons for the release of this great comic?*



PM: All three comics were an extension of my personality. And that would have gone for John Wagner, too. So… if you think of Oz magazine. It's great, very important, but it's hippy, it's psychedelic, and - above all - it's middle class. So all concerned went on to established counter culture careers.

I wanted to say something which was anti-establishment, working class and empowering for youth, all reflecting my own background. Hence why I had Action letters printed in their original form. It had elements of punk and skinhead culture.

I think my hatred of the establishment was very much reflected in Action - and still is in what I write today. That's not something that can be faked. So others who simulated it didn't succeed. We all have to find our own path.

CS: *The hoo-har by the Mary Whitehouse brigade , the Sun and Nationwide must have pissed you off a bit, any thoughts about this?*

PM: It was actually inevitable. I'd left Action by now and I knew they were going too far. The art of subversion is to go under the radar. To give the Oz example again, there's clearly a personal element of ego-tripping there and why not? Good luck to them. But true subversion is more subtle.

The reward doesn't require popular acknowledgement, least of all from the BBC, that bastion of the establishment.

So look at the figures - Oz sold 30 to 40K, to middle class Guardian readers etc. Action sold 120K to mainly working class kids. That gives me quiet satisfaction.

CS: *What storyline got them most worked up? I'd guess Hookjaw but due to the rampant football hooliganism of the day it was probably Look out for Lefty eh?*

PM: I think you're right. They were looking for a reason to shut it down. The cover provided the excuse, a colouring error made it look like a cop was being attacked in Kids Rule Okay. I went white when I saw it and the Action staff were saying, 'We shocked even Pat' - like that was cool.

Mistake. If we as writers are serious about exposing establishment figures as the villains so many of them are and featuring working class heroes as role models to help empower young readers, then we have to do it with a certain measure of intelligence and thought. There are still a few of us out there today - Spacewarp, due out in April or May will demonstrate this. It's a one off but it's a step in the right direction.

Mike Todd also writes for Vive Le Rock and Infinity magazines. He can easily be found on Facebook.

"I wanted to say something which was **anti-establishment, working class and empowering** for youth, all reflecting my own background."

Author: Michael Todd

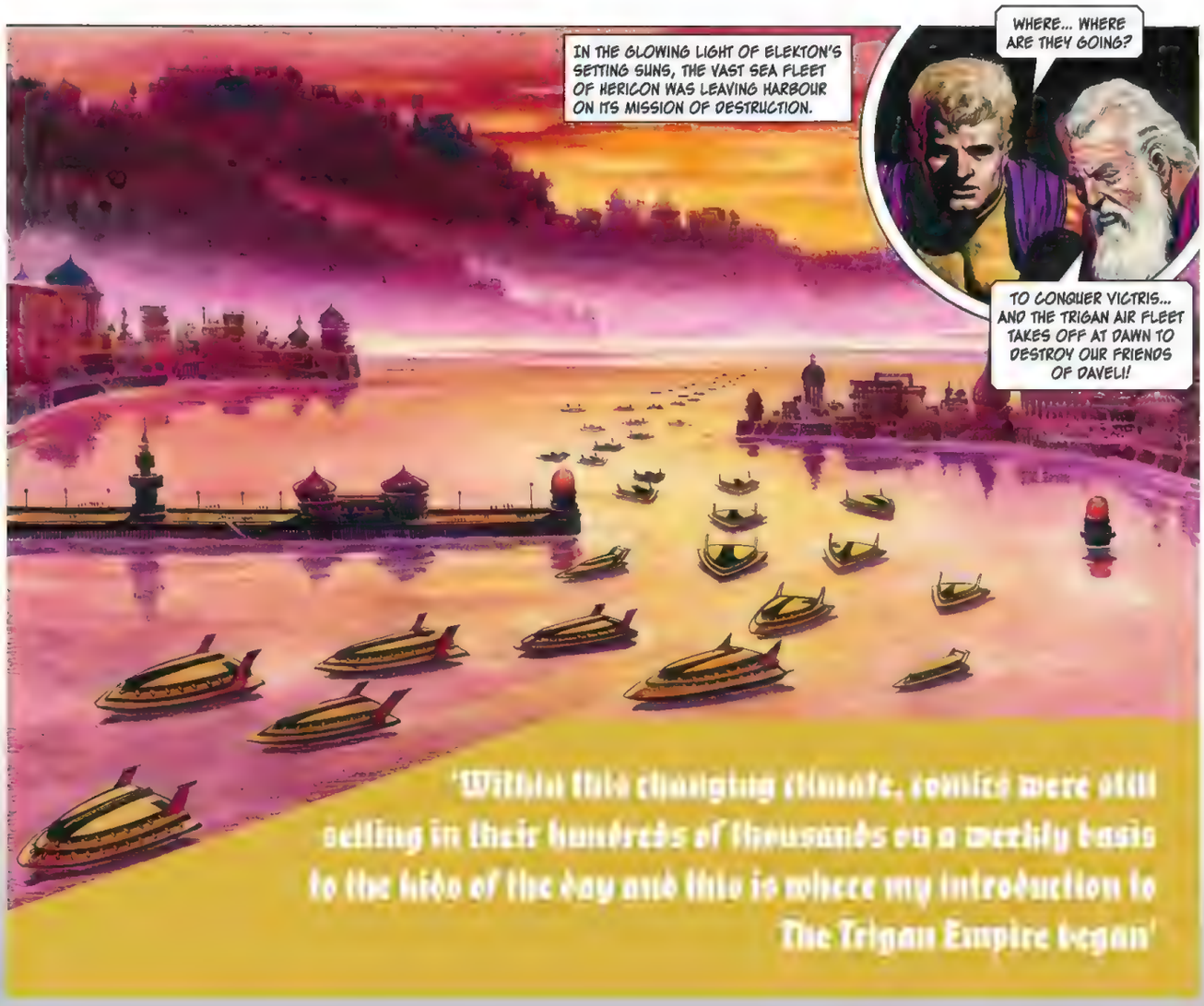
Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:25 Page 56

When Rebellion Publishing acquired the rights of Fleetway's back catalogue between 2016 and 2018 I was somewhat dubious to say the least. Initially, it felt like a betrayal as when Michael Jackson bought the rights to The Beatles music in the context of is this just some money-making scheme? To be honest I should have been celebrating due to the fact that a well-respected company could potentially resurrect some greats of British comics and reintroduce them to old and newer readers alike

Thankfully this has been case and more so, as they have released some amazing stuff under the umbrella of Treasury of British Comics. So far the likes of Janus Stark, Steel Commando, Charley's War, Death Wish and The Leopard from Lime Street have seen the light of day. On a personal level, one of my favourites, Roy of The Rovers, has also been brought back to life, though not reprinted which would have been the easy option. No, the storyline has been completely rebooted with a young Roy Race beginning his career at a struggling Melchester Rovers in The Championship and we also get to follow the exploits of his younger sister Rocky which is handy with the rise in popularity of women's football.

Bringing things bang up to date, I am over the moon about the latest release, due out March 2020, The Trigan Empire, as it not only brings back many happy memories of my childhood but also brings back into the spotlight the amazing writer Mike Butterworth and artist Don Lawrence.

To begin with here's a little historical recap for you. Please travel back with me to the mid 1960's. Britain was still in the process of recovering from World War Two and many old bombsites were still around for kids to play in. Today's P.C brigade would have a nightmare, viewing what we got up to unsupervised. Labour was in power under the leadership of Harold Wilson, businessmen wore a suit with a tie and bowler hat and if anyone had tv, then it's three channels were viewed in black and white. The takeaway was the local Fish and Chip shop and only the well off had a telephone in their own home, the rest of us had to use the public phone boxes. Now I could go on and on about this subject but I know it would start to sound like a Monty Python 'When I was a lad' sketch, so while I'm ahead I'll quit. Into this rather drab portrayal of urban


IN THE GLOWING LIGHT OF ELEKTON'S SETTING SUNS, THE VAST SEA FLEET OF HERICON WAS LEAVING HARBOUR ON ITS MISSION OF DESTRUCTION.
WHERE... WHERE ARE THEY GOING?
TO CONQUER VICTRIS... AND THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET TAKES OFF AT DAWN TO DESTROY OUR FRIENDS OF DAVELI!
'Within this changing climate, comics were still selling in their hundreds of thousands on a weekly basis to the kids of the day and this is where my introduction to The Trigan Empire began'

AND THEN PERIC AND JANNO HEARD THE TRAMP OF BOOTED FEET IN THE GARDEN OUTSIDE.
THAT'S THE DOOR.
JANNO FELT A SUDDEN SHOCK OF FEAR, WHICH HE INSTANTLY QUENCHED.
BUT PERIC HAD NO SWORD... AND IT WAS WITH A HEAVY CANDLESTICK IN HIS HAND THAT YOUNG JANNO FACED THE ARMED MEN.
RIGHT! COME AND GET ME!
THEY'RE LOOKING FOR ME! GIVE ME A SWORD, OLD FRIEND. LET ME DIE FIGHTING, LIKE A TRIGAN!

life, Britain was undergoing massive changes. Brand new housing estates and high rise flats were cropping up all over the place and a cultural revolution was underway in music, fashion and lifestyle.

Within this changing climate, comics were still selling in their hundreds of thousands on a weekly basis to the kids of the day and this is where my introduction to The Trigan Empire began. I'd often leg it if I spotted my aunties popping round for a visit, the reason being I wanted to avoid the big sloppy kisses and head patting. Sometimes though, they came bearing gifts and I had to endure it. Mostly they'd give me sweets and comics which was great and well worth the torture. As I got a bit older they replaced the comics with the Look and Learn magazine. I soon twigged on that the publication was designed as an educational tool for older children, a concept that didn't quite sit right for a scruffy kid growing up in Middlesbrough. Now, not only did I have to endure my aunties unwanted fussing but I had to put on a brave face as they obviously thought I was a bit thick and needed help in the grey matter department. As soon as the aunties had departed the magazine was filed in the nearest bin and I gave my face a good scrub with grass and mud.

However, my viewpoint changed at junior school, because whenever it was raining during the lunch break we weren't allowed out and the unlucky ones were herded into the library. I say unlucky because we had to quietly read or face the consequences which was usually a cuff around the lugs. Thankfully issues of Look and Learn were always at hand and seeing I was in an educational establishment anyway it didn't feel like I was being coerced into learning. I was amazed at the content. Lavish, full-page illustrations depicting things like Robin Hood, Richard the Lionheart and The Battle of Hastings. Stories about Hadrian's Wall and Tintagel Castle were done in comic strip fashion so that even the likes of myself could absorb and remember key information easily.

It still contained some dreary stuff that did nothing for me like the workings of a combustion engine, what the inside of the eye looked like and the migration path of the African Swallow. I just saw no benefit with that sort of thing as I was flicking Subbuteo figures around a pitch at home. Perhaps if there was an issue that mentioned trajectory, speed and angles it might have made me a better Subbuteo player but I doubt if I'd have read it anyway.

What had changed with these later issues that I read at school was that for some reason proper comic strips were now included. By far the best of them was a Sci-fi strip called The Trigan Empire. No mention was made of the writer or illustrator of this fabulous strip and at that stage, I probably wasn't bothered about that injustice anyway. It was the story and fantastic art that had me drawn in hook, line and sinker. What I could gather from the disjointed stories I got to read was that it was set in the distant past on a faraway planet called Elekton. It was populated mainly by humanoid races called The Trigans and The Hericons. The main ruling power were The Trigans who wore a mixture of Ancient Greek and Roman styled clothing. Their rivals The Hericons

'A spacecraft is hurtling towards Earth. Inside are the dead bodies of it's humanoid looking crew who had all died of extreme cold'

preferred to potter about in Ancient Persian type attire.

The capital city of The Trigans called originally enough Trigan City was built on five hills, nearly as many as Rome which was built on seven(I learnt that fact from Look and Learn). The main gist of the tale was basically a huge 'What If?' storyline. What if the Roman Empire had not collapsed and was still ruling the world? Would they have progressed to the extent of The Trigans who had developed high tech Ray guns and Space Craft? Who knows? Heady stuff indeed. The Trigan Empire first came to life within the pages of issue one of Ranger magazine in September 1965. Ranger magazine lasted forty issues until the dreaded 'Good news inside' announcement told the readership that it was biting the dust. It was swallowed up by Look and Learn magazine from issue 232 of that aforementioned publication in June 1966, thus explaining why comic strips now appeared within.

Here's a little synopsis of the first storyline that appeared in Ranger:- A spacecraft is hurtling towards Earth. Inside are the dead bodies of it's humanoid looking crew who had all died of extreme cold when the craft's heating system packed in. Although being human in appearance it has to be noticed that these guys are big. Very big! In fact, over twice as big as the average human male at 12ft tall. The spacecraft crash lands in a swamp in Florida where it is rescued and put on display at a World Fair where it becomes the main attraction(Yes, I know it would have been shipped straight off to Area 51 if set in our time). Volumes of books and charts are recovered from the vehicle but no one can decipher the strange writing and symbols.

One young man called Peter Richard Haddon devotes his life work to cracking this code and at the age of seventy with the aid of a new fangled computer that looks as big as the one that NASA used when sending a rocket to the moon he finally cracks it and is able to begin work on translating the volumes and charts. What follows is the tale , charting the rise, of three brothers, triplets actually, called Brag, Klud and Trigo who are leaders of a nomadic tribe inhabiting a country called Vorg on the planet Elekton. Obviously back in the real world stuck in my junior school library on a rainy day, I was blissfully unaware of any of this storyline as Look and Learn just carried on where Ranger left off with no recaps whatsoever. Thankfully most of us have the ability to view or read something and still enjoy it without the need of a recap or full history. A fact proven when my daughter dragged me to see Avengers End Game when I hadn't even seen Infinity War.

As mentioned previously, The Trigan Empire was written mostly by Mike Butterworth and drawn by Don Lawrence. Mike Butterworth was born in Nottingham in 1924 and his early interest was mainly in Art, so much so that one of his first jobs was as a tutor of drawing at the Nottingham College of Art. This job didn't last long and he eventually found work at Amalgamated Press which became Fleetway Publications. Butterworth initially tried his hand at art but soon realised he was better suited to script writing. His comic strip writing work included Max Bravo, the Happy Hussar and the more well known Battler Britton. He later turned his attention to writing some well received crime novels and other books until his death aged 62 in 1986.

Don Southam Lawrence born in East Sheen, London in 1928 was one of the finest comic artists this country has ever produced. After a stint in the Army due to National Service Don attended the Borough Polytechnic Institute where he studied art. Unbelievably he failed his final exams. Undeterred he found work at a small local publishing company where he drew the superhero Marvelman before ultimately finding work with Amalgamated Press were he mostly drew strips for Lion comic including Karl the Viking, Olac the Gladiator and Maroc the Mighty which was penned by Michael Moorcock.

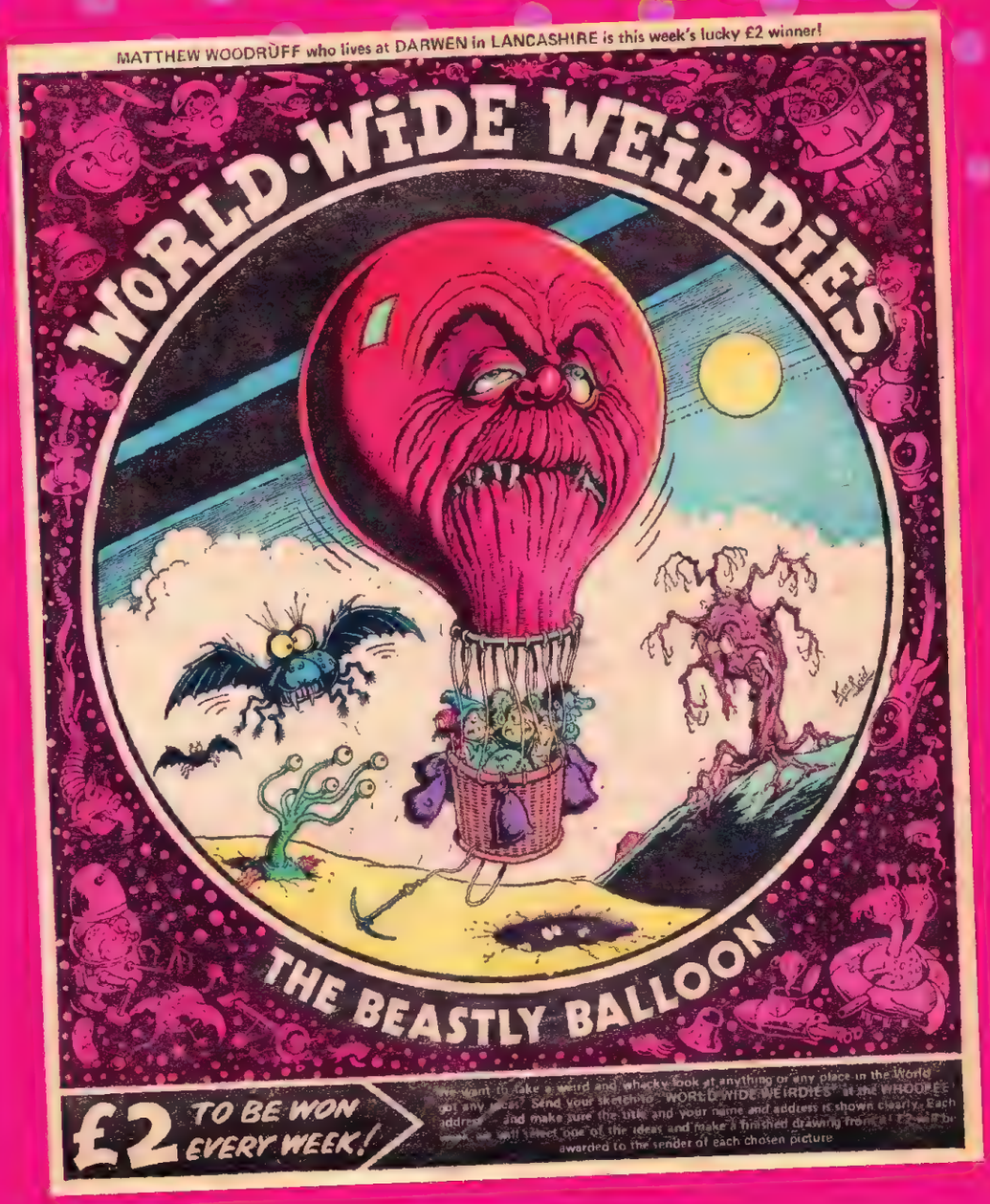
All this fantastic output ensured Don got the gig for, giving it it's full title, The Rise and Fall of The Trigan Empire. Don worked on The Trigan Empire for eleven years creating a staggering two pages a week of high quality graphics while still finding time to do other work such as Fireball XL5 for TV Century 21 Comic. Sadly he was given little credit and recognition during this period and to make matters worse British comics at that time only paid their artists once for their work. As the Trigan Empire was being reprinted in lots of foreign countries, Lawrence wanted a pay rise and a share of royalties from reprints. He got neither, so he resigned in 1976 and got the fame and fortune he deserved with Dutch publishers Oberon. Don Lawrence inspired such artists as Brian Bolland and Dave Gibbons. He even taught a young Chris Weston. Don died at the age of 75 in 2003 leaving a marvellous legacy for us to enjoy, check out the website dedicated to him. Donlawrence.nl

Michael Todd writes for Infinity and Vive Le Rock magazines and is easily found on Facebook.

Author: Michael Todd

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:26 Page 60

THE KEN REID WANTED POSTERS & WORLD-WIDE WEIRDIES


MATTHEW WOODRUFF who lives at DARWEN in LANCASHIRE is this week's lucky £2 winner!
WORLD·WIDE WEIRDIES
THE BEASTLY BALLOON
£2 TO BE WON EVERY WEEK!
We want to take a weird and whacky look at anything or any place in the World! got any ideas? Send your sketch to "WORLD-WIDE WEIRDIES" at the WHOOPEE! address and make sure the title and your name and address is shown clearly. Each week we will select one of the ideas and make a finished drawing from it. £2 will be awarded to the sender of each chosen picture.

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:26 Page 61

In the early autumn of 1973, IPC began making plans to expand their comics portfolio with yet another children's paper – WHOOPEE! With 'Creepy Creations' going strong in SHIVER AND SHAKE, they chose the easy path of emulating a good thing and came up with 'Wanted Posters', with Ken Reid as the illustrator.

Children of the 70s were well-familiar with wanted posters from Western films where the eye-catching paper signs were widely used to inform the public of a lawbreaker who authorities sought to apprehend. The posters had a characteristic design and included a picture of the criminal – a useful formula for a children's comic to exploit. The idea was to invite readers to create their own posters by sending sketches of wholly invented characters, along with witty text consisting of an affectionately lurid description of their crimes and the bounty offered for their capture.

Ken was busy at that time ('Faceache' for BUSTER, a football strip for SCORCHER and a 'Creepy Cartoon' for SHIVER AND SHAKE). Ken was busy as it was, but he liked the idea and accepted the offer. The new assignment added a further £13.00 per page to his weekly income, which now amounted to £72.30 – a very decent, especially bearing in mind that in 1973 the average UK weekly earnings was only £30.00.

Ken created the first of a series of 'wanted' poster for inserting illustrations and text, and the first wanted character was The Abominable Dough-Man, 'wanted' for encouraging gourmets' contributions of children to gorge themselves at parties, eating far greedy, messy goodies. Ken's work passed to London in the second half of October 1973.

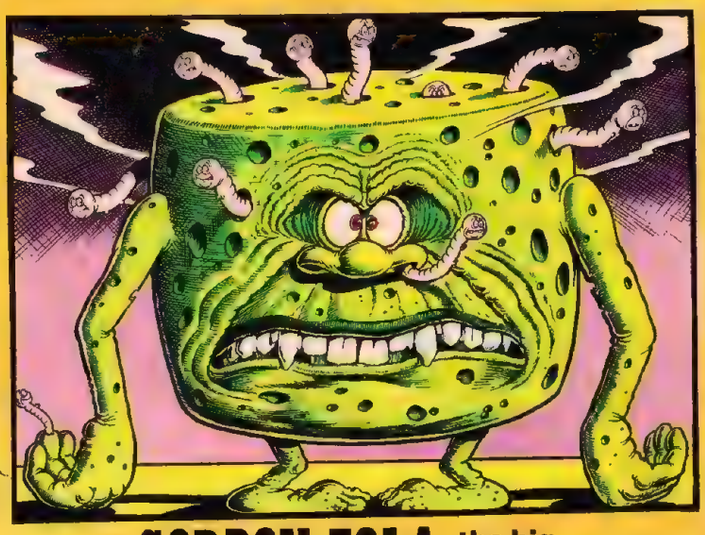
In the middle of December Ken received the go-ahead to proceed with further drawings. As always the production process required a stockpile of drawings to be used until regular sketches began flowing in so Ken created the next six characters from his own ideas. They were The Callous Castor Oil Conceptor – Nathaniel Nogg, alchemist and maker of foul-tasting [illegible] Cane Maker – supplier of canes to fiendish teachers, Damian Dreadful Dragon the Dragon – the devourer of despairing damsels, Tiddles the Terrible – the horror of dicky birds, The Fiendish Universal Watcher – a Big Brother type of fiend, and The Satanic Slipper-Tester – a sadistical chap who gauges depths of steaming dishes on a dining. Although these were the original characters [illegible] Ken [illegible] IPC thought it necessary to change [illegible]

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:26 Page 62

This week's Wanted Poster wins £1 for Julie Hammond of Worthing

WANTED

for turning people green (and not with envy either!)



GORDON ZOLA the big cheese

REWARD: ONE MOUSE TO GET RID OF THE CHEESE, AND A MOUSE TRAP TO GET RID OF THE MOUSE

£1 to be won every week!

CAN YOU DESIGN A WHACKY WANTED CHARACTER ? SEND YOUR SKETCH TO "WANTED POSTER" AT THE WHOOPEE ADDRESS – AND MAKE SURE THE POSTER WORDING AND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS IS CLEARLY SHOWN. EACH WEEK A STAFF ARTIST WILL COMPLETE A FINISHED DRAWING FROM THE ENTRY HE SELECTS. A PRIZE OF £1 WILL BE AWARDED TO THE SENDER OF THE CHOSEN PICTURE.

31

the Cadre-Oil Man, The Diabolical Cane Bender, "Hotlips" the Dragon, I.C.All Nasty Parker and Swipe the Slipper Tester in the printed versions.

From WHOOPEE! No 8 onwards, all "Wanted Posters" were drawn from readers' sketches that PC sent Ken from London. Sometimes a call suffced – for instance "Orrible Onion" was drawn from a description he was given over the phone.

Ken worked on the feature for ten months from the middle of October 1973 until the middle of August 1974. The complete "Wanted Posters" series consists of 31 drawings in WHOOPEE! issues 7 - 31. By the time he sent the last poster on 14th August 1974, Ken had already submitted the final "Creepy Creature" for SHIVER AND SHAKE and was working on the last football page for SCORCHER, which meant that the busiest period of his career at IPC – when his output amounted to four pages per week – was coming to an end.

"Creepy Creatures" in SHIVER AND SHAKE and "Wanted Posters" in WHOOPEE! both ended simultaneously and for the same reason. At the end of July 1974, IPC

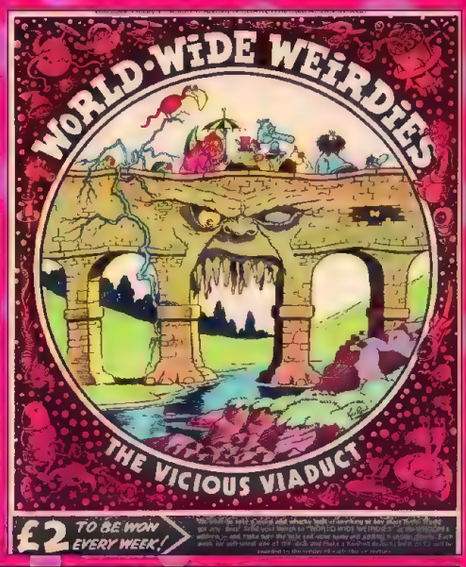
composed backgrounds became more detailed and usually filled the whole space of the illustration.

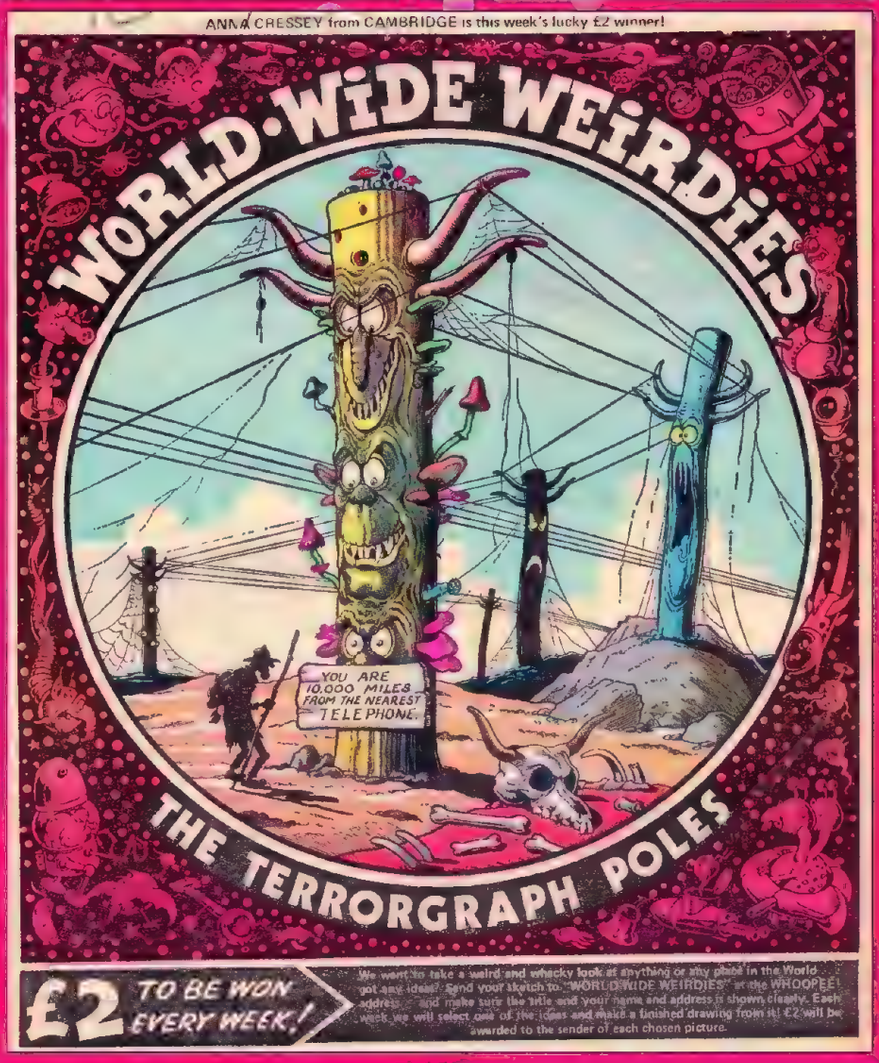
The call for readers' contributions said that WHOOPEE! wanted to take a weird [illegible] place in the World, and offered a weekly £2 prize [illegible] to make a finished drawing [illegible] thrill of seeing his or her name in print, provided extra motivation. The response was so enthusiastic that IPC never experienced a shortage of ideas for the series.

The motley crowd of 'World-Wide Weirdies' which appeared during more than four years of the feature's run falls [illegible] numerous being that of 'ordinary' humorous monsters. Some are man-made contraptions, like The Aussie Doomerang, The Weird Weighing Machine, The Terrorphone, The Traffic Frights and The Scarey'o' System. Others are monsterized plants and animals, such as The Diabolical Dutch Tulips, The Weeping Willow, The Vicious 'Fang'aroo and Punk 'Crock'er. Buildings and [illegible] in this group represented by The Isolated Igloo, The Perilous Pagoda, The Weird Windmill, The Terorgraph Poles, The Frighthouse, The Vicious Viaduct and the like. Last but not least are two smaller subcategories of natural phenomena – The Creepy Cloud, Terror Tornado, The Not so N-iceberg, The Frightening Lightning and a few others, and space-themed posters: The Monstrous Moon, The Eerie Earth, The Loony verse, etc. Striking miscellaneous characters such as The Loch Mess Monster, The Motorway Menace, The Horrible Haggis and The Hair Messer [illegible] consisted of more than 120 sets.

Real landmark buildings, structures and man-made places of interest form another distinctive category of the 'World-Wide Weirdies' series. As many as thirteen are London attractions, including The Houses of Horrorment, Trafalgar Scare, Westminster Abbey, Jeckyl & Hyde Park and The Creepy Chew Gardens, with a dozen more featured in tourist brochures of Britain

CUT OUT AND COLLECT THIS SIDE-SPLITTING SERIES OF POSTERS!
WANTED
for swatting (and we don't mean homework or files, either!)
SWIPE the SLIPPER TESTER
REWARD: ONE FIRST AID BOOK— IDEAL FOR PADDING SEAT OF TROUSERS
£1 to be won every week!



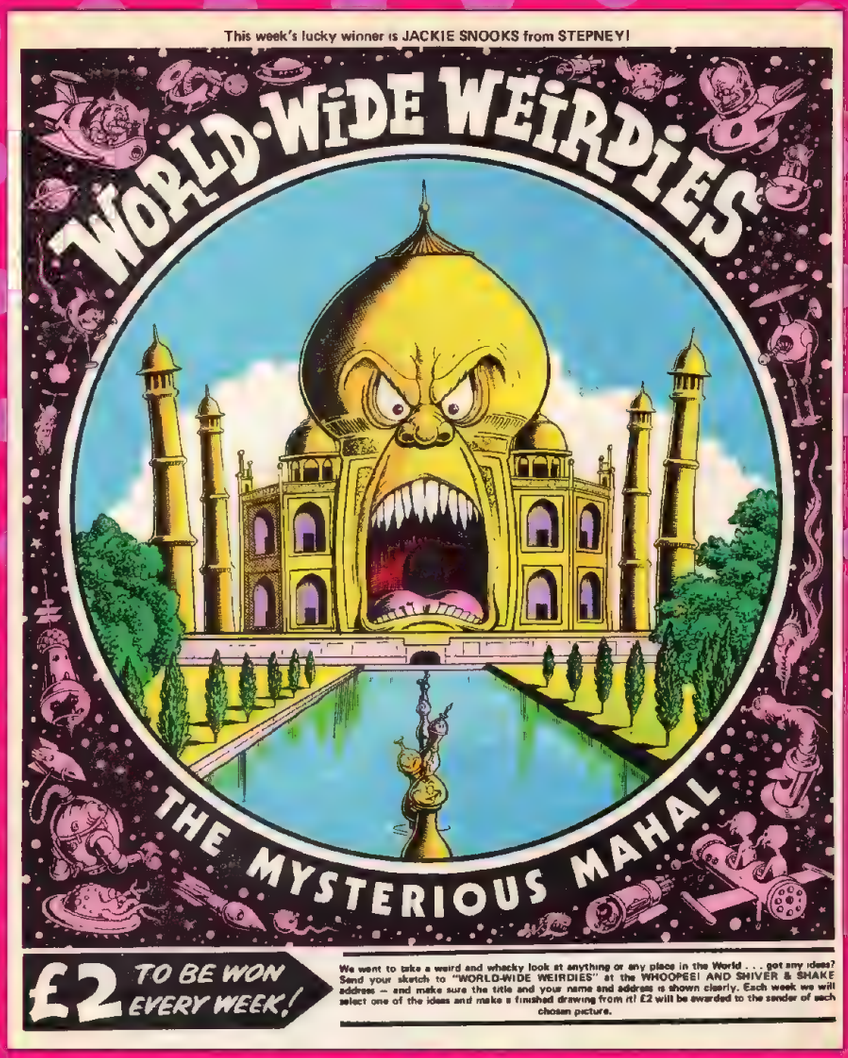

ANNA CRESSEY from CAMBRIDGE is this week's lucky £2 winner!
WORLD-WIDE WEIRDIES
YOU ARE 10,000 MILES FROM THE NEAREST TELEPHONE.
THE TERRORGRAPH POLES
£2 TO BE WON EVERY WEEK!
We want to take a weird and whacky look at anything or any place in the World – got any ideas? Send your sketch to "WORLD-WIDE WEIRDIES" at the WHOOPEE! address – and make sure the title and your name and address is shown clearly. Each week we will select one of the ideas and make a finished drawing from it! £2 will be awarded to the sender of each chosen picture.

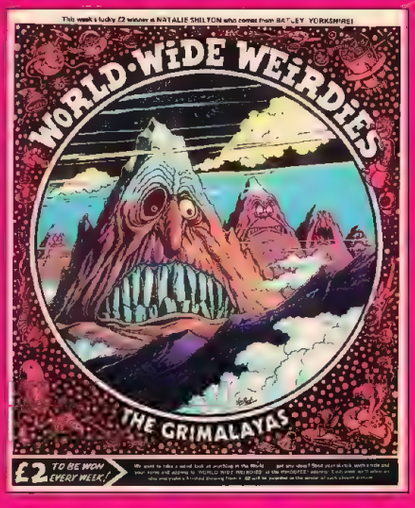
"MONSTERIZED PLANTS & ANIMALS"

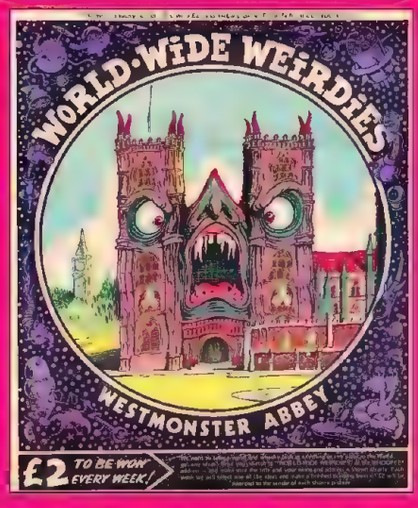
[illegible] Shakespeare's Macbeth, Scarborough Castle, [illegible] Hamlet, as well as stories from the Bible (The Tale of Tutty, The Crucifixscream, Ghoulditz Castle), former British colonies (The Mysterious Mahal, The Jinx Sphinx, The Fear-os of Alexandria) and from across the Atlantic (The Vampire State Building, The Statue of Stupidity). This category comprises more than 30 posters, as does another which features geographical places, including continents (Horsertalia, A'freak'a), countries (Pole'l [illegible] Cuba) and various natural places of interest in Britain and beyond (The Mouth of Thames, The Scarewood Forest, The Beastly Barrier Reef, The Gruesome Grand Canyon, The Isle of Fright, The Awful Andes, The Nasty Niagara, The Knobbly Pair o'Knees and [illegible]

The last small but interesting category consists of drawings that can be described as caricatures. Some lampoon famous events, such as The Terror of France, The Miss Weird Contest and Mid Freak Match, others portray well-known personalities – both real and fictional – for example, King Tut-an-Terror, The Lunch-Pack of Notre-Dame and The Mona Lisa, The Sardonic Cyclops (pictured) to the younger of Thor Heyerdahl, while Freaky 'Faulty' Towers celebrates the hilarious BBC television sitcom. The British Fright'Casting Company and especially 10 Clowning Street are the closest Ken Reid ever came to political cartooning.

Many 'World-Wide Weirdies' are funny and amusing, quite a few are strange and a little spooky but some are outright scary, depressing and other-worldly. Human skulls and bones fill the windows of the Scary Skyscraper [illegible] a [illegible] crowned on the rooftop and [illegible] a giant figure of Satan looms over Devil's Island as a sky-high wall of fire arises from beyond the horizon, along [illegible] emerging from the waters that are about to overrun a lonely castle set amidst bare rocks; a sombre group of zombies and spooks marches on misty Trafalgar [illegible]


This week's lucky winner is JACKIE SNOOKS from STEPNEY!
WORLD-WIDE WEIRDIES
THE MYSTERIOUS MAHAL
£2 TO BE WON EVERY WEEK!
We want to take a weird and whacky look at anything or any place in the World . . . got any ideas? Send your sketch to "WORLD-WIDE WEIRDIES" at the WHOOPEE! AND SHIVER & SHAKE address — and make sure the title and your name and address is shown clearly. Each week we will select one of the ideas and make a finished drawing from it! £2 will be awarded to the sender of each chosen picture.





"SKELETON GUARDS &

Column before its bronze lions were replaced with mythical beasts, its relief panels with monstrous masks, and the statue of the Admiral replaced with that of a grinning skeleton; and then we have a long procession of D.C.W.'s emerging from the gates of Ghoulditz Castle with skeleton guards and zombie monks in the foreground.

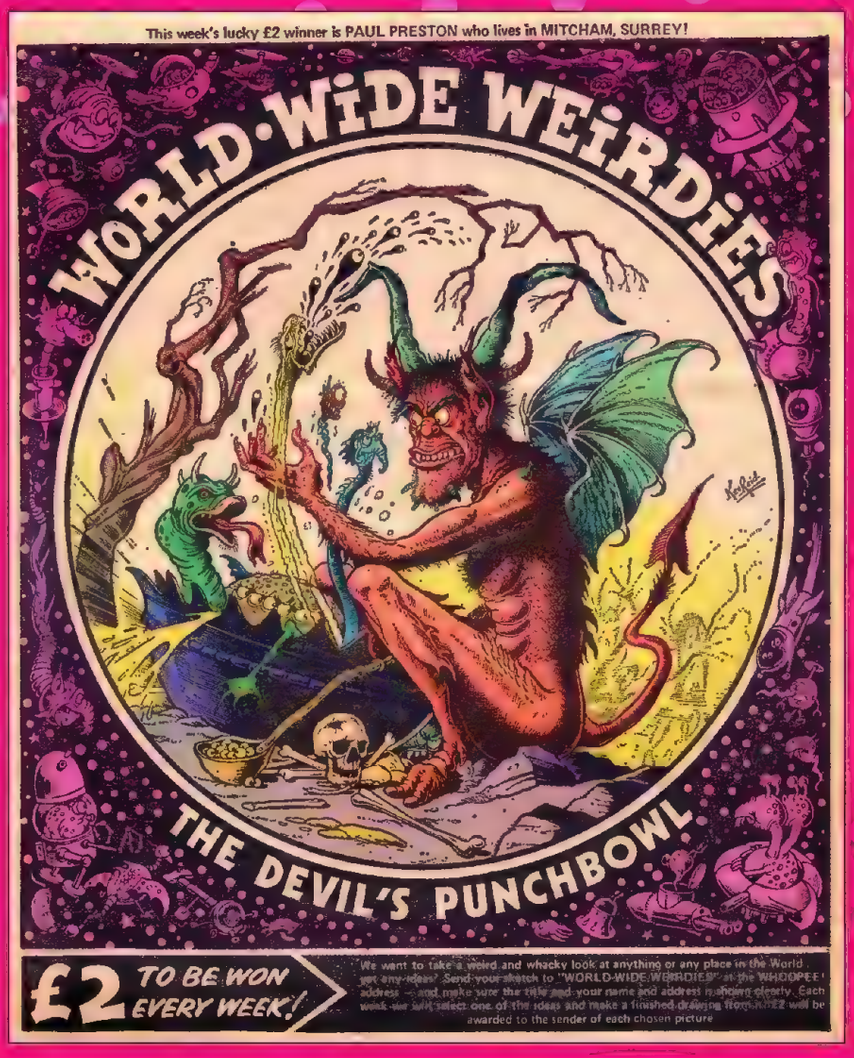
Looking back, it is hard to believe that those grand images have come from a children's humour paper! The disturbing scene of Satan brewing a concoction in The Devil's Punchbowl poster would look out of place in a medieval book on Faustian hell. Black magic, the sinner's guide to the eternal horrors of the netherworld! These are only a few of the depressing drawings which Ken pushed and occasionally overstepped the boundaries of the horror comedy genre.

A possible explanation for the dark drawings might lie in the fact that the mid-70s was the period when Ken's marriage was crumbling. The divorce hearing took place on the 5th of May, 1976, and with the help of a sympathetic judge, Ken's wife dissolved the marriage in the courtroom. The divorce became Ken's personal hell as he struggled to come to terms with this and simultaneously cope with his workload. The stress and demands of the break-up gave rise to the dark demons within Ken resurfacing, just as they did when the pressure of work caused his mental breakdown while working for D.C. Thomson in the early 60s.

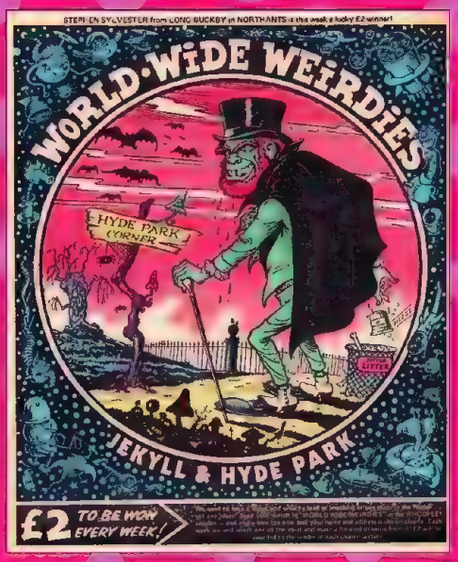
The next few months were particularly difficult for Ken. Unable to concentrate on work, he failed to come up with the two World-Wide Weirdies due in October, and recorded a further loss of £40 because the job of drawing the 1976 Creepy Calendar earmarked for the first two issues of WHOOPEE! in 1976 was re-assigned to Robert Nixon.

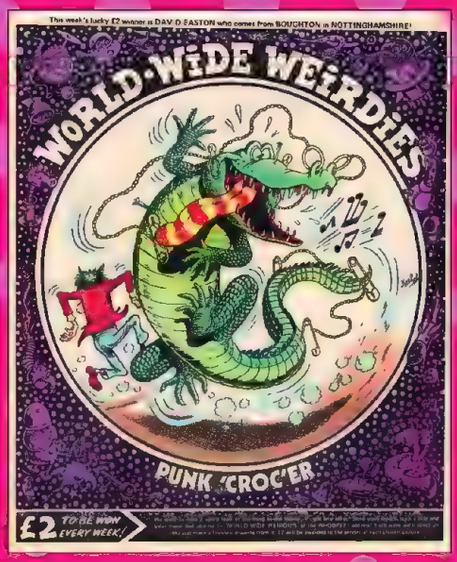
Ken made it up to IPC a year later with a large autographed WHOOPEE! 1977 Calendar printed on the centre pages of the first two issues of WHOOPEE! in that year. It showed the diabolical Sun encircled by 12 barmy planets representing all the months. IPC paid Ken for the calendar with two cheques of £60 each. By that time Ken's rate for normal World-Wide Weirdies illustrations had already seen two increases – it had gone from £15 to £17.25 as of April 1975 and from £17.25 to £20.00 as of the middle of February 1976, with two more – from £20.00 to £22.50 as of the end of February, 1977 and from £22.50 to £25.25 – as of the middle of January, 1978 – still to come.

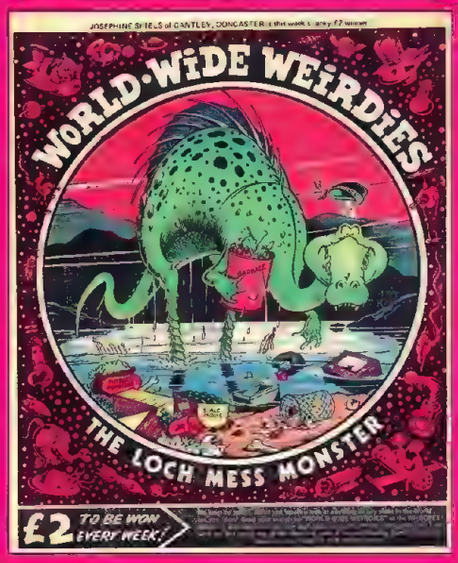
Given the effort Ken put into his drawings, these increases were clearly justified. But they were still generous, particularly for one single illustration. In fact, the format of the feature suited both the artist and the publisher: no script or layout was required from the scriptwriter or IPC editorial staff, just a title, and the editing process of looking at a single illustration versus a completed set was minimal, thus saving IPC costs but still filling a full page in the comic. It was also a good deal for Ken as he had a border to work in, and once he had the title, he could just let his imagination run wild. No layout, no back forward with the editorial staff, and – judging by the comments in his diary – very few instances of censorship.


This week's lucky £2 winner is PAUL PRESTON who lives in MITCHAM, SURREY!
WORLD-WIDE WEIRDIES
THE DEVIL'S PUNCHBOWL
£2 TO BE WON EVERY WEEK!
We want to take a weird and whacky look at anything or any place in the World ... got any ideas? Send your sketch to "WORLD-WIDE WEIRDIES" at the WHOOPEE! address – and make sure the title and your name and address is shown clearly. Each week we will select one of the ideas and make a finished drawing from it. £2 will be awarded to the sender of each chosen picture

& ZOMBIE MONKS"







July, 1974 until the 10th of August, 1978 when he submitted his last poster (Were Wolves United). The series premiered in the first combined issue of WHOOPEE! AND SHIVER & SHAKE cover-dated 12th October, 1974 and concluded in WHOOPEE! cover-dated 21st October, 1978. The issue of 29th March, 1975 was the only one without 'World-Wide Weirdies' during that period (besides the two pairs of twin issues that contained the 1976 and 1977 calendars). The complete series consists of 203 illustrated posters in the weeklies, all drawn – and quite a few signed – by Ken Reid.

Interestingly, there were three more that were rejected. The School of 'Wails' printed in WHOOPEE! dated 23rd April, 1977 was first submitted as Wales (with reference to the Welsh miners). The title suggests that Ken chose the mining angle for his original version, but it was a sensitive theme in the 70s, so IPC preferred to play it safe and instructed him to take a different approach and exploit the wails/whales wordplay instead. Then there was something about Ken's Weird/Whacky Whirlpool that the editor didn't like, so readers only saw the second drawn version in WHOOPEE! issue dated 17th December, 1977. Lastly, The Tower of London which Ken posted off to IPC on 10th November, 1977 would have been a welcome addition to the gallery of monsterized London attractions, but IPC rejected Ken's take on it without suggesting how to make it printable.

The feature was one of the highlights in WHOOPEE! and had quite a wide fan-base, ranging from little boys ringing Ken's front door bell and asking, goggle-eyed, 'Are you the man who does World-Wide Weirdies?' to George Martin, editor of THE BEANO during the golden years of the comic and managing a range of children's publications at IPC Magazines, who told Lew Stringer of his admiration for 'World-Wide

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 12 13-1-20.qxp_Layout 1 03/02/2020 09:26 Page 67

Weirdies' when Leo visited him in Dundee in the Summer of 1977.

The three series of weird creature posters by Ken Reid which started off with 'Creepy Creations' in 1975 [illegible] (now [illegible]) circle in 1980 when the last Holiday Special of that title featured a pull-out [illegible] Tour of London. Drawn and signed by [illegible] in March 1980, it shows a [illegible] Houses of Horrorment, Westmonster Abbey, Trafalgar Scare and Jekyll 'N Hyde Park, all but two closely resembling the originals in WHOOPEE! The Ghost Office Tower and Spookers Corner were the exceptions: the former had lost the pack of spooky tenants and acquired a gloomy face, while the latter no longer included the zombie preacher on a coffin-shaped rostrum, only showing a gathering of monsters waiting for someone to address them. The original was drawn and inked by Ken on a cartridge board measuring 19 x 12 inches, and coloured-in by IPC staff artists; IPC paid Ken £50 for his work.

Ken drew all his 'Creepy Creations', 'Wanted Posters' and 'World-Wide Weirdies' in black and white, twice the size of their printed versions. Original pieces of Ken's artwork are highly sought after by fans and collectors and occasionally turn up at auctions. For example, the artwork of the Fright Seeing Tour of London poster was auctioned in autumn 2007 and changed hands for £611.

Unfortunately, IPC were notoriously negligent with their original art archive and a significant part of it was lost when the company relocated to a new building in the late 70s. The new building did not have the archival space afforded to the editorial staff in the old headquarters, and the result was the destruction of many, many thousands of pages of original art. By far the largest sector of the comic art genre to suffer during the purge and destruction of the archive was the humour artwork which was considered to have the least potential for overseas syndication.

"ORIGINAL PIECES OF KEN'S ARTWORK ARE HIGHLY SOUGHT AFTER BY FANS AND COLLECTORS AND OCCASIONALLY TURN UP AT AUCTION"

And so literally thousands of pages of irreplaceable artwork by many notable comic luminaries such as Ken Reid, Leo Baxendale, Roy Wilson, Bob Nixon, Reg Parlett and a host of others were unceremoniously dumped into skips or burned on site in the building's boilers. So it's a miracle that any of the pages have survived and are now scattered across private collections. Sadly, this rules out the prospect of seeing Ken's original illustrated poster art collected in a portfolio edition, but it is great that Rebellion are now putting out a collection of the little masterpieces scanned from their printed versions in the comics.

EPILOGUE: When 'World-Wide Weirdies' was put to rest in October 1978, the editorial decision was to replace it with a new reader participation feature. However, this was something that did not even remotely resemble the horror comedy theme that was gradually losing its appeal to the young reader, and it was this that was given to Ken to illustrate. In his notes, Ken referred to it as 'Doodles'. IPC initially considered naming it 'Picture Gallery' but settled on 'Prize Pictures' in the end. The idea was to ask the readers to draw a simple object or shape, but then adding to it to make a very different picture. Readers' drawings would then be given to Ken who would re-draw them professionally. In preparation to launch the new feature, at the end of June 1978, the WHOOPEE! editor asked Ken to draw three sample pictures to give readers a better idea of what their competition entries should look like. In his drawings Ken turned a key into a bird, a jar into a train engine and a broom into an ice-cream cone.

The feature was introduced, and Ken's sample drawings were printed in WHOOPEE! cover-dated 12th August, 1978 – two months before the last 'World-Wide Weirdies' poster. The simple idea and the prize of £2 per picture generated a strong reader response, and Ken added the feature to his regular work portfolio starting from the middle of August. However, the drawings were quite unremarkable and Ken hardly spent much time working on them, but the pay was good – initially the rate was £30 for the weekly set of four pictures, and was increased to £34 as of the end of February, 1979. 'Prize Pictures' was the last of Ken's non-comic strip work and ran in WHOOPEE! for almost a year and a half from 28th November, 1978 – the first post-'World-Wide Weirdies' issue of WHOOPEE! – until the issue cover-dated 2nd February, 1980. This would be the final edition before merging with CHEEKY comic.

Author: Irmantas Povilaika | **Website:** kazoop.blogspot.co.uk

UGHH! THIS COMIC IS BORING! SO CLICHÉ
LOL
A LOT
DAILY
COMIC!
FRIENDS, I HOPE I'VE MADE MY POINT, EH?
GASP! DID SOMEONE SAY BORING??
WHAT THE?!!
THERE'S NO PROBLEM STATING THE OBVIOUS, CHAP!
PUFF
PUFF
CALL A SPADE A SPADE, EH?
YOU KNOW WHAT? BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT SUCH A CHAMPION FACE, I'LL LET YOU IN ON A LITTLE SECRET...
OH BOY!!
PIPEDREAM COMICS!
PIPEDREAM COMICS
DISCOVER INDIE AND SMALL PRESS IN THE UK
COMIC REVIEWS · INTERVIEWS
CLICK
YOUR ONE-STOP SHOP FOR ALL THINGS INDIE AND SMALL PRESS. NEWS, REVIEWS, INTERVIEWS AND MORE!
THANKS FOR THE TIP YOU WONDERFUL, CREEPY LITTLE MAN!
NOT AT ALL, MY BOY!
DISCOVER THE BEST OF INDIE AND SMALL PRESS COMICS AT
WWW.PIPEDREAMCOMICS.CO.UK
/PIPEDREAM COMICS
@PIPEDREAMCOMICS
ARTWORK BY TODD OLIVER TODDOLIVER.MOCARTEL.COM @TODDOLIVER

THE STATE OF INDEPENDENTS

The UK's independent and small press comics scene has never been more exciting. We bring you a look at some of the best!

It was a great year for indie comics in 2019, and **ComicScene** have joined forces with **Pipedream Comics** and **A Place To Hang Your Cape** to bring you this definitive list of the very best!

ATOM AGENCY VOL. 1 (EUROPE COMICS)

If you had to describe a perfect example of a Franco Belgian bandes dessinée then you should show them Atom Agency. Atom Vecorian is a struggling detective who looks to make a name for himself by finding the missing jewels of the wife of the Aga Khan, aided by plucky sidekick Mimi and reluctant 'muscle' and former wrestler JoJo Top. With an enigmatic femme fatale and gorgeous French locations this is a rip roaringly fun read that is packed full of Gallic cool that will have you clamouring for more the minute you reach that final glorious page!

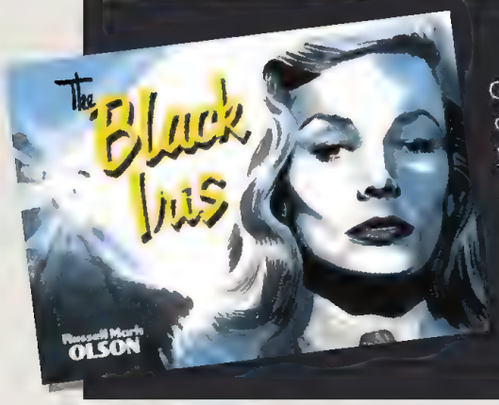
COIN OP COMICS #8 (COIN OP BOOKS)

Our pick of books from this year's Thought Bubble 2019, Peter and Maria Hoey's collection of short stories straddle the worlds of comic and art books with 4 glorious experiments in sequential story telling. Revolving around the theme of infatuation they range from surreal time travel 'what ifs' to an Art Deco version of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth. With immaculate finishing and impeccable design and layout, this hard-cover edition is one of the classiest books we have read all year!

THE EXCHANGE (MADIUS COMICS)

It's been a strong year for Madius Comics and a large part of that has been this unexpected gem. While nominally being about a put-upon teacher going on a job share, it is much more than that, because the school our hero ends up at is in the strange and surreal world of Old Queensdock – where the national motto is "don't be weird". Writers Rob Jones and Mike Sambrook layer the book with quirky humour and sarcastic asides, while newcomer Liam Hill's unique art and neon colours make this into one of the strangest and most hilarious books around.

THE BLACK IRIS (SASSAFRAS PRESS)



Gateway City's Russell Olson created this book as part of last year's Inktober event, but it developed into something much more. A wordless series of single page images based around a fictitious movie. It is packed with a powerful heroine taking on Nazi robots and more, and is the perfect vehicle for Olson's pulpy style. However it also has this really original feel to it thanks to the full page image structure, which is based on '30s and '40s movie picture books. It makes it into something much more original than the usual pulp inspired books we read, and thanks to Olson's masterful use of a brush and pen markers (as well as it's oversized, A4 landscape format) it is a truly sumptuous and gorgeous read.

Produced in association with Pipedream Comics

For more great indie comics coverage visit www.pipedreamcomics.co.uk

THE GLASS HOOD (LABRAT COMICS)

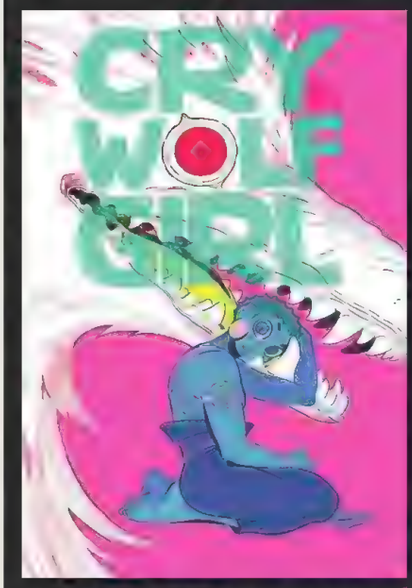
It's been a bumper year for writer Matt Garvey, and perhaps his most eagerly anticipated book was this return to the world of critically acclaimed Red Rocket Comet. This spiritual sequel to RRC is set in the same universe, but is not a direct sequel and sees Garvey reunited with artist Grayham Puttock and joined by newcomer Stefano Pavan to create another split style super hero/villain stand off. This tale of the villainous Glass Hood getting his revenge on the heroic Commander Justice, after 20 years in prison, feels like a glorious hybrid of crime noir and classic superheroes. It' a fantastic genre mash-up, and while not quite up to the dazzling heights of RRC, this is such a strong concept for a comic that it should keep Garvey and co in quality comics for as long as they want.

HILDA & THE MOUNTAIN KING (FLYING EYE BOOKS)

What was once indie comics best kept secret, Hilda has gone mainstream in 2019 thanks to her new Netflix animated series. However with that step into the limelight, creator Luke Pearson has not let the quality of the source material wane. Quite the opposite, as he has released one of the best Hilda books to date. Hilda and the Mountain King has an emotional depth to it that the previous volumes about our favourite blue haired Scandi scamp couldn't quite muster. When Hilda is turned into a troll, she ends up stuck in the mountains and a troll baby takes her place back home. As a result, Hilda must find the mysterious Mountain King in order to reverse the spell before her house gets completely trashed. While this book is packed with the kind of high energy hijinks that we love in the Hilda books, it is the relationship between Hilda and her mother which is the true highlight. As the previously strained relationship is rekindled in the way that only the love between a parent and a child really can.

THE INCREDIBLE BUN #2 (MADIUS COMICS)

Madius Comics' tale of a giant bunny who goes to the city to find his fortune has evolved from a cutesy animal tale into something much more unique. Writer Mike Sambrook takes what started off as 'Rocky with Rabbits' meets Harvey, and continually second guesses reader's expectations about where the story is heading. Meanwhile artist Rosie Packwood balances cutesy animals, gritty action and ambitious panel layouts with a sublime colour scheme to give this book a real confidence. As a result it ends up being like Watership Down meets Fight Club and is evolving into a really smart and ambitious title packed with originality and hidden depths.



CRY WOLF GIRL (SHORT BOX COMICS)

It's a challenge to pick a stand-out title from your average ShortBox collection, but Ariel Ries' Cry Wolf Girl is a riotous blend of grief, paranoia and empathy. Drawn and coloured with a fierce confidence that wonderfully compliments the schizophrenic nature of heroine Dawa, Cry Wolf Girl is a comic where everything clicks into place and rattles along at breakneck speed. Ries' spry and compact comic bursts with feverish flavour, but never forgets to tell a rich, coherent story.

GUN #6 (RECKLESS EYEBALLS PRESS)

Jack Foster's subversive supervillain series has been a perennial favourite at Spectrum Comics thanks to it's winning mix of post modern capes and gorgeous painted artwork. It's like Superior Foes of Spider-man meets Kingdom Come. However, for this latest issue Foster took a break from the satire/ Slaughterhall arc (which sees villains compete in a cross country race with a bomb) and gives us a one off look into a moment from Trevor 'M' Swift's past.

Foster uses the concept of a villain with multiple personality disorder to bring in a strange and twisted romance, that works as a fantastic snapshot of the wonderful world he has created in Gun. It also features some of the most breath taking painted pages we have seen this year and is a stark reminder of how important it is for indie comics to keep their vibrancy and originality going throughout a run. This one off issue is a great time to get into this criminally underrated series!

EARWORM (RICK QUINN)

Moody, melancholic and meticulous, Earworm is a muted powerhouse of narrative and visual talent. Rick Quinn and Milton Lawson's flowing ink comments upon the lost dangers of showing in montage, whilst Martyn Lorbiecki's evocative art fuse together into an exquisite package of wistful horror. Hassan Otsmane-Elhaou's lettering is the glue binding everything together, resulting in Earworm boasting a delicate yet gripping power.

KILLTOPIA #2 (BHP COMICS)

After a strong debut in 2018, the sophomore issue of Dave Cook and Craig Paton's high tech dystopian sci fi tale begins to really build on that strong foundation and prepare readers for the future. After the action heavy first issue, this is much more about character development and wider world building, all of which helps to really grow the world of Killtopia into something more substantial than just another Bladerunner/Akira wannabe. The story of Shinji, a trainee wrecker and the newly discovered sentient mech Crash continues to build, but alongside it we learn more about the supporting cast, such as the pilot of the King Kaiju wrecker and all conquering wrecker Stilleto. By rounding out these supporting characters it becomes a much richer story, and that in turn makes the stunning visuals and concepts even more enticing.

MILKY #2 (JOSHUA SAXON)

Your local milkman might not be the obvious choice for a hero to take on an alien invasion, but that's what makes Joshua Saxon's series such a fantastic underdog tale. When a group of all powerful aliens try to kidnap earth's women, it is up to milkman Vikander Singh (aka Milky) and a rag tag bunch of misfits to help save the day (especially Milky's unrequited love Lucy). With the style and humour of Simon Pegg movie the Word's End, but mixed with the edginess of a Mark Millar book, this is a fantastically entertaining read and a really unique and very unconventional angle for such a classic sci-fi story. With top drawer production values this is one book which is well worth getting delivered!

THE SEVEN SAGAS OF SILVERBEARD (CATFOOD COMICS)

As well as being a great comic this was one of our favourite Kickstarters of 2019. With a comic that starred an immortal gorilla and his adventures as a pirate, the campaign also featured the fictitious history of forgotten small press publisher Catfood Comics – complete with a treasure trove of Silverbeard comics. Writer Pete Taylor has revelled in creating this brilliant world, mixing homages to Conan the Barbarian and classic pulp serialss, with a knowing nod to classic silver age comics in some of the extras he offered in the campaign. With the book outlining all seven sagas of Silverbeard, thanks to a magazine style catch up feature, this is a book which is about so much more than just the story on the page, and is a reflection of what an original and exciting world you can create in self-funded small press.

THE LEGEND OF LA MARIPOSA: THE DEMON GAUNTLET (JAMES LAWRENCE)

It's been a strong year for wrestling comics, but this new print collection of James Lawrence's excellent webcomic is the true champion! Our heroine is an aspiring luchador (a.k.a. masked Mexican wrestler) who wants to join up with the Sons of Justice, a kind of superhero style luchador group, but she is sent on an initiation mission to claim the masks of four powerful demons. This gives the series a quest like structure that allows La Mariposa to battle an increasingly diverse collection of villains, as well as making each chapter feel like a self contained episode of a Saturday morning cartoon. With that high energy tone exhibited on every page, it mixes colourful over the top characters with a delightful sense of humour to create a book that should appeal to more than just grappling fans, but anyone who likes an action packed all ages adventure.

Produced in association with Pipedream Comics
For more great indie comics coverage visit www.pipedreamcomics.co.uk

SINK #6-10 (COMIXTRIBE)

It's not easy to write a really good, nasty, horror comic. The tendency is to replace plot and character with blood and guts in order to shock. However in this tale of life on a Glaswegian sink estate, John Lees has managed to create some truly shocking and unforgettably horrific moments - all the while building strong and engaging characters who make the stories into more than just an excuse for outrageous gross out moments. From an unlikely BDSM romance to a gang of killer clowns in a van, Sink is packed full of the kind of characters you wouldn't want to meet on a dark night, but who are strangely compelling all the same. While not for everyone, Sink is a tour de force of horror, and the rich mix of interconnected character based stories are brought to life with some stomahc churning visuals from Road of Bones artist Alex Cormack.

SILENT HORNS (WINE AND ZINE)

The first full length comic from Bryony Evans is a wonderfully potent story about coming of age and acceptance. Yfa is a young hexerei and when their horns come through, they begin to develop magical powers. But when Yfa's horns come through her powers don't appear immediately and so she begins to question why she isn't like her friends. Silent Horns is a beautifully told story, that has real heart and emotional depth to it. On the surface it is your classic tale of puberty and acceptance, yet it feels like it could be so much more than that for any teen who is looking for something relevant to them – especially anything to do with gender or sexuality. With gorgeous pencil style artwork, packed full of expressive characters and sublime detail this is a really accomplished story which feels like it offers a positive message for teens and parents alike.

SPACE CAPTAIN #5 & 6 (NEVER EVER PRESS)

We've seen some fantastic finales this year (from The Walking Dead to Giant Days), but few have had the emotional impact on us that Chris Baldie's Space Captain finale did. Consistently one of our favourite small press books, the Captain has been searching for the meaning of his status as the last living human in the universe, and this year we were treated to not one, but two new issues, in which we see him reunited with his alien friends as well as finding his way back home. However the real emotional treats are reserved for him finally remembering how and why he ended up in this situation. Baldie manages to fill these moments with a really heartbreaking pathos that brings to a conclusion one of the most glorious indie series of recent years.

SENTIENT (TKO STUDIOS)

Jeff Lemire and Gabriel Walta's emotionally-charged sci-fi epic is deeply textured in the personalities of its characters. A group of children forced to pilot a space vessel to safety across the treacherous unknown of space, with only a single A.I. to assist them, quickly blossoms to become a deftly character-driven story of grief, trust and danger. Walta's supple shapes and colours latches onto Lemire's tense story to superb effect. With Sentient, TKO continue to be a publisher of exceptional taste.

MANU: ALTIPLANO VOL. 1 (TACU TINTU PRESS)

Set in a world of cyborg jaguars and deadly augmented assassins who do battle in the South American jungle, MANU is one of the most exciting and original series we have read all year (and was the justified winner of Pipedream Comics; Indie Comic of the Year 2019). After the appetisers that were Trujillo and L1MA, Gustaffo Vargas delivers the main course with MANU. He expands the scope of his amazing world to bring us this first long form story set in his stunning South American sci-fi dystopia he has created. With more time to build characters and develop the world around the action, Vargas' tale of an enigmatic loner who is hunted in her jungle retreat only for her secret past to be revealed is a frenetic, action-packed delight, that would feel right at home in 2000 AD thanks to some quality art and story telling. The action is under pinned by some strong character work and truly stunningly original visuals. This is a real one of a kind comic from one of the most exciting Indie creators working in the UK right now.

THESE SAVAGE SHORES VOL. 1 (VAULT COMICS)

It's been a landmark year for Vault Comics who seemed to have released a new must-read book every month. One of the true stand outs has been this gloriously exotic series which has become the jewel in Vault's crown. Ram V's South Asian vampire folk tale takes slices of Gothic drama and relocates them to the sub continent which gives everything an exotic and unique visual and cultural setting. With sublimely detailed artwork from Sumit Kumar, this has been a book at the top of our recommendation list for the whole of 2019, and with the first arc now complete you can truly take in all it's sublime glory.

TRANSFER #2 (LABRAT COMICS)

It's been a productive year for writer Matt Garvey, with the release of 7 new titles. Picking which ones made this list was not easy, however our favourite of his books was perhaps the most surprising – the second issue of mind swap thriller Transfer. Set in a world where people's consciousness can be transported around like cargo, courier Steve is caught up in the middle of a situation he cannot get out of when a job turns sour and he ends up in a body he did not anticipate. With one of the best final pages we have read this year, thanks to a jaw dropping twist this has been one of the stand out reads from one of this year's most inventive creators.

STAND IN YOUR POWER (RACHAEL SMITH)

With Stand In Your Power, Rachael Smith has somehow delivered a collection of autobiographical comics that's rawer, more heartfelt and funnier than her previous collection, Wired Up Wrong. Themed around a turbulent breakup, Rachael's warm, pleasant artwork juxtaposes the often unflinching nature of her slice-of-life stories, as she guides us through the ups and downs of pulling yourself out of emotional despair. Stand In Your Power stands as a cathartic roar from one of indie comic's brightest stars.

X, Y, Z (IQBAL A)

Iqbal Ali's output weaves together sci-fi, fantasy, detective, horror and more, but always with an emphasis on characters. His greatest strengths come into play in x, y, z, a comic that utilises racism and youthful isolation as a metaphor for some determinedly weird, otherworldly drama. Beautifully drawn by Aleksander Bozic, whose vigorous detailing cements x, y, z in a warped flavour of reality, Ali's and his 2019 graphic novel is a muscular and fearsome character study.

ZOOT! #3 (HOTEL FRED PRESS)

Roger Langridge's annual anthology of strips featuring his characters like Fred the Clown, Art D'Ecco and The Hump et. al. has been a perennial small press favourite, but this new issue seems to have really stepped up a level. It's still packed with the outrageous humour and anarchic spirit which we loved in previous volumes, but this issue is framed with a series of stories about Roger's insomnia which sees him link the various strips together in a half asleep state. It means the whole thing hangs together beautifully and gives a superbly simple structure for the eclectic stories to hang off.

THE PLOT VOL. 1 (VAULT COMICS)

It's been a stellar year for Vault Comics in 2019, with plenty of mentions in this run-down already, however The Plot is the best of the bunch. A pair of teenagers go and live with the uncle after the murder of their parents by a mysterious Swamp Thing like creature. Instead of going somewhat to normal, they go to live in this creepy family house, which has plenty secrets to hide – from family secrets to creepy haunted basements.

It's a classic slice of creepy Gothic horror which feels like a non Stephen King novel, yet is told with a super stylish Bronze Age style that makes it feel like a lost Vertigo book from the late 80s.

Co-writers Tim Daniels and Michael Moreci brilliantly ease mystery after mystery in this tense and intriguing series, while the vintage artwork makes it feel as dark and murky as it's antagonistic villain. It took something really special to stand out from Vault's incredible line up this year, but The Plot manages to do that by creating a slice of timeless unsettling, creepy horror.

Produced in association with Pipedream Comics
For more great indie comics coverage visit www.pipedreamcomics.co.uk

KICKSTARTER WE LOVE!

We look ahead to new out of this world anthology The77

With crowd funding platforms like Kickstarter now THE place to fund an indie comic, we get an advanced preview of one of the most exciting titles of 2020 - The77.

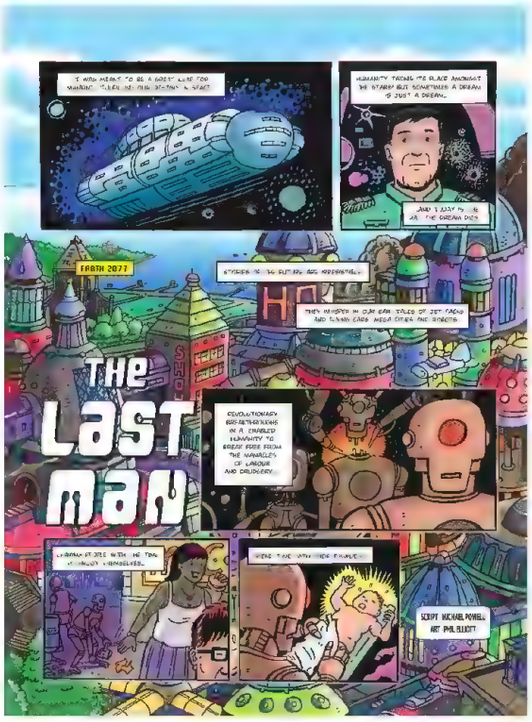
As you read this the **The77** team are counting down to the Kickstarter deadline of 2nd March. So if you are intrigued enough to want to investigate more and back the project you are cordially invited to put this fine magazine down and get online to Kickstarter '**The77**'.

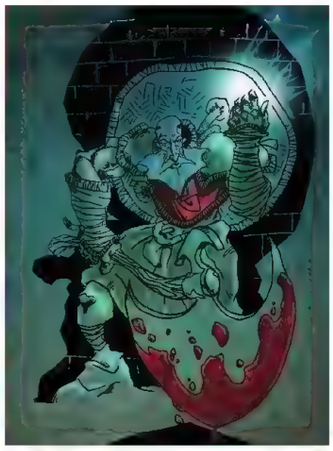
The first issue features work from a phenomenal pool of talent without whom **The77** would literally be nothing. We are delighted that we have been able to attract such an amazing group of talented creators, to have your heroes - Glenn Fabry, with our front cover, Ian Gibson's new creation, '**Lifeboat**' gracing the back cover. We have a feature on Sam Read and Mick McMahon's 'Joe's **Killer Robot Dad**' and John Wagner, Alan Grant and Dan Cornwell's **ROK the God**. Phil Elliot (**The Last Man**) and many other stalwarts of European graphic literature pitching in, along with 21st century creators, such as Kek-W, Conor Boyle, John Charles, Tom Newell, Mal Earl, Karen Holloway, Neil Sims and many more is quite an amazing achievement and our thanks goes to all involved.

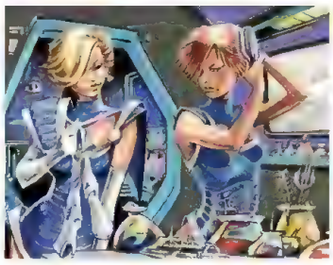
We are also looking to promote brand new writers and artists, and to that end we will have Drew Marr's '**Key-Runners**' featuring in our première issue. Still not 12, Drew has created several successful comics that are published by Gold Lion publishing and we are very excited to work with him. **Please contact us if you'd like to pitch for a story in a future issue.**

The77 has reached out across time and space and attracted a huge level of support. There are literally thousands of followers across the various media we've used and we hope that they will buy into our wish to bring back the good old fashioned anthology comic to readers.

There'll be a PDF version, physical copies and plenty of amazing rewards including original artwork, a variant cover, T shirts and an opportunity to meet creators at the official launch at Lawless in May. Thanks must also go out to those that follow the day to day goings on at The77 on Facebook and Twitter. We really believe that shining a light on the development of our exciting new comic anthology will allow us to involve those amazing individuals who have backed us and are looking forward to the next instalment, expected by September.







The77 features new series like The Last Man (Phil Elliott), Lifeboat (Ian Gibson) & Penny Pentagram (Jon Roydon)

Who we are: Ben K Sy created a Facebook group discussed here and elsewhere '**1977-2000AD**' which started it all. The77 Publishing is a collective effort, with Steve Bull, Dave Heeley, David Bedford , Paul McCollum, Jo Heeley and others without whom we wouldn't be anywhere near this point.

Follow The77 on Facebook and Twitter **@77comic**

Find The77 - a comic book anthology on Kickstarter from 1st February - 2nd March 2020.

Sequential Empathy

The Unflinching yet Sensitive Flourishing of Mental Health in Indie Comics: Part 3

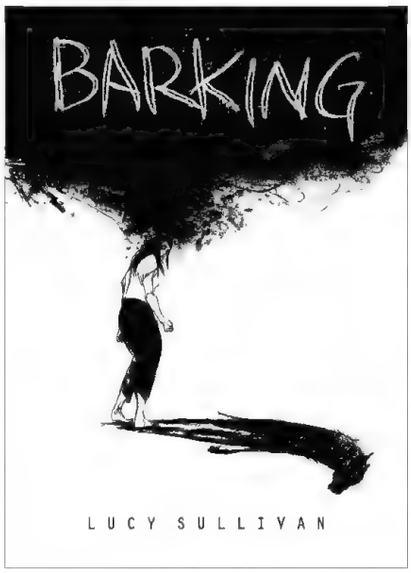
In the third part of our series about mental health in indie and small press comics, Fred McNamarra talks to creators about their increasing popularity and impact on readers.

Mental health's image in independent comics has continued to blossom in the past year, not just in the level of content being produced, but the demand for them grows alongside. Rachael Smith's second collection of autobiographical comics, Stand In Your Power, was one of our picks of the year, and is every bit as unyielding and humorous as Wired Up Wrong. While Lucy Sullivan's Barking was also successfully crowd-funded via Unbound, and resulted in a graphic novel that adds a great deal more narrative and thematic thrust to mental health in indie comics, thanks to its stark yet hypnotic monochrome artwork. They join the likes of Long Division, Skip to the End, Anxiety Me, Every Life I've Ever Lived, Taemons, The Mind of James Svengal, and Quiet Girl in a Noisy World as part of a wonderful selection of high quality mental health comics that are now available within the indie scene.

And there are more to come, as other outfits embark on projects uncovering the ties between mental health and comics. For example, Illustrating Futures, a co-venture between Comics Youth CIC and the University of Liverpool, aims make sense of how compassionate and understanding comics and zines can be when themed around mental health.

Creating a positive message

In a medium that can be easily pigeon-holed into various categories, there's something liberating how positive encapsulations of anxiety and depression can be found within any form of comic. Brain Shoodles' low-key bluntness, Rollercoaster's hallucinogenic qualities, and Tales of the Fractured Mind's epic scale are worlds apart from each other in terms of style, but their tone remains consistent. Just like how mental health can target anyone, mental health representation can be found in just about any form of these indie comics.



Barking was a number of high profile books looking at mental health in 2019

"I've been told by my readers many times that the book made them feel less alone, or that it made it easier for them to explain their feelings, which is amazing," says Rachael Smith. "I'm so happy that I've managed to help people." Fractured Minds creator Roddy McCance echoes Rachael's sentiments. "I guarantee there's always great stuff being made, but I think it's getting it into the mainstream that's the next step. I think that's the power of art. It doesn't belong to the creators it belongs to people that need it."

> "Just like mental health can target anyone, mental health representation can be found in just about any form of indie comic."

Wear and Tear Zine creator Katarzyna continues this theme "My intention is for the readers of my Wear & Tear zines to feel like they aren't alone in their mental health experiences, while helping others understand what mental health problems can feel like if they don't themselves have that experience."

Brain Shoodles Emily Owen agrees: "A little compassion and empathy goes a long way and I'd be so pleased if my comic could help someone who may not have experienced mental illnesses understand them better.

Perhaps that's the true reason why mental health representation amongst independent comics grows in popularity. Confirming their very 'real' nature, these comics don't pretend to offer a clear-cut answer or a quick solution to being cured of mental illness. They acknowledge that it's a prolonged journey, and don't owe the reader a positive narrative or a happy ending. Instead, these books act as an outstretched hand, offering readers some light amidst darker moments, a clutch of brave, bold voices combined together that form an almighty, empathetic roar.

Their literary value can't be ignored either. The continual volume of material being produced that packs in a mixture of thoughtful tenderness and vibrant flair in their narrative and visuals, and their rapturous welcoming by readers suggests the desire to see mental illness depicted truthfully in independent and small press comics shows no sign of losing its momentum.

EURO-SCENE

EUROPEAN COMIC REVIEWS

LUIS BUSTOS SEGÚN EL LIBRO DE NACHO CARRETERO
LA NOVELA GRÁFICA
FARIÑA
HISTORIAS E INDISCRECIONES DEL NARCOTRÁFICO EN GALICIA

Title: Fariña
Author: Nacho Carretero
Artist: Luis Buistos
Origin: Spain
Publisher: Plan B
Price: €18.90

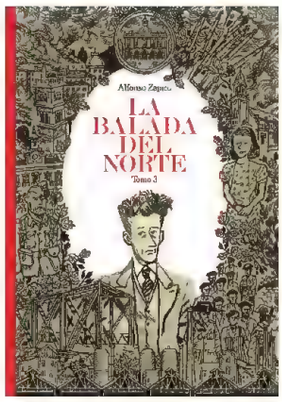
Having already been made into a hit TV series in both Spain and on Netflix, Nacho Carretero's bestselling book - Fariña (Blow) - which focuses on the emergence of the drug trafficking in Galicia in the 1980s, has now been inked as a graphic novel.

If you enjoyed Narcos on Netflix, this is definitely the comic book for you. Based on real events, Carretero has documented the growth of Spain's own Narcos out of the old tobacco smuggling industry that operated between Galicia in north-western Spain and nearby Portugal.

Buistos brings it to life in red, white and black. The bloodier the battle gets between traffickers, government forces, the clans battling for territory and the Colombians, the more the colour red fills the page in front of you.

This comic is intricately drawn and easy to read as the panels are laid out in a standard format and it is divided chronologically into chapters, which recount the story from beginning to end.

Fariña is a fascinating tale about a region of Spain, which is truly spectacular but gets very little coverage outside of the Iberian Peninsula. Anyone interested in gangster themes and drug trafficking related stories will really enjoy this huge news story which is relatively unknown outside Spain.



Title: La Balada del Norte Tomo 3
Author: Alfonso Zapico
Origin: Spain
Publisher: Astiberri
Price: €18

We continue our focus on Spanish comics creators this month with a look at Alfonso Zapico's wonderful Balada del Norte (The Northern Ballad). Zapico has had previous success with two previous editions of the same title and Café Budapest.

Although he is now based in Angoulême in France, this title focuses on his native region of Asturias in northern Spain where a workers rebellion in the early 1930s acted as a prelude to the vicious Spanish Civil war, which ran from 1936 to 1939.

Zapico's work is fascinating. The detail in his drawings is incredible and the level of research that goes into his subject matter is nothing short of admirable.

La Balada del Norte revolves around the families of two men - Apollonio, a miner, and Tristan, the son of the owner of the mine in which Apollonio works. In the early 1930s the second Spanish Republic teetered on a knife edge as the working classes and bourgeoisie clashed regularly with a weak government struggling to contain the discontent on both sides of the divide.

This boiled over with the Revolución de Asturias when workers took over mines and factories across the region prompting a heavy handed reaction from the government who sent in the army and navy to quash it.

All three titles are fine examples of the intricate work you can expect in a continental comic. Zapico uses some artistic licence in giving us an unlikely love story but it takes away nothing from the overall result.

Despite being drawn in black and white this is a graphic novel full of colour and is an insightful window into a critical period of Spain's modern history. It is an absolute must read for anyone who enjoys comics about war, the trade union movement or Spanish history.

Euro Scene Flashback

Title: Out in the Open
Author: Javi Rey
Origin: Spain
Publisher: SelfMadeHero
Price: £14.99

Out in the open is the desperate tale about a boy who is beaten by his father and every time he runs away from home a gang, led by his father and the local sheriff, search for him and beat him even more.

It is based on Jesús Carrasco's novel of the same name and is beautifully brought to life in comic form by Rey. Carrasco's original debut novel won the European Union Prize for literature. Rey has had previous comic successes with Adelante and Un Maillot Pour L'Algérie.

We join the story in the baking desert just where the olive groves start to run out. Our protagonist has fled once again and is determined to stay away for good this time.

Having tried to steal some food from a shepherd, the boy eventually becomes friends with the old man and we experience a sad yet heart-warming tale in which Carrasco shows us the best and worst of humankind.

Rey uses colour in his drawings to brilliant effect. From how the palette lights up this tale to the way he depicts the excruciating desert heat along with his excellent ability to draw facial expressions.

Out in the Open was first published in the UK in 2018 and is well worth visiting if you are looking to delve into continental comics a bit further.

Comic-Cons on the Continent!

From this month's edition we are going to introduce a couple of developments to the Euro Scene column. Firstly, we are going to bring you updates of big comic's festivals coming up on the continent, which you may want to explore or drop into on your holidays.

Secondly, we are going to start interviewing some of the creators we feature in this column who are releasing new stuff in the UK and Ireland.

Lastly, we are going to start taking a look back at some classic continental comics and some contemporary ones that may have slipped under your radar in another feature called 'Euro Scene Flashback'

This month we feature two of the more eye-catching festivals coming up on our calendars.

The 30th January 2020 sees the opening of the **47th Festival Internationale de la Bande Dessinée in Angoulême** until the 2nd February. This is the celebration of comics in Europe and, arguably, the world. Here they hand out some of the most prestigious awards in the comics' world and all of the continents A-list comics-creators are there. See their website for more info **https://www.bdangouleme.com/**

From the 28th February until 1st March is the **Salón del Comic València in Spain.** This festival features special guests - including Marvel artist Salva Espín - signings, talks, book launches, exhibitions and much more to do with the world of comics and graphic novels. See their website for more info **www.saloncomicvalencia.com/**

Author: Thomas Sargent | **Twitter:** @nousrembobinons

Hello there! My name is Samuel George London and every Monday I host Comics For The Apocalypse. A podcast that puts guests into a fictional apocalypse where they then have to choose some comics to take with them. I interview about 4 guests a month but from now on I'll be summarising one of those interviews right here in ComicScene. This month's guest pick is the creator of Manu, Pipedream Comics Indie Comic of the Year 2019, Gustaffo Vargas. If you listen to the episode you'll hear how much of a beautifully bright personality he his but if you don't get round to it here is a breakdown of our chat.

The first comic he remembers enjoying is The Amazing Spider-Man #121 (June 1973) - The Night Gwen Stacy Died. In Peru during the 90s comics were few and far between but he managed to pick this up in an A5 format, and he really enjoyed it because the title of the comic was revealed until the end, which for obvious reasons is a major spoiler.

The funniest comic that he's read is Mafalda by Quino. Best described as a South American version of Peanuts it's one of the most widely read comic strips in South America.

The saddest comic that he's read is Epileptic by David Beauchard. A powerful auto-biographical story about the author's brother living with epilepsy, Gustaffo found it particularly sad because he had a neighbour living with epilepsy when he was growing up as a young lad in Peru.

The scariest comic that Gustaffo has read is House of Sweets by Fraser Campbell, Iain Laurie, David B. Cooper and Colin Bell. Gustaffo found the balance between what was real and not real particularly haunting.

Gustaffo's favourite cover is that of Hellboy in Hell #10 by Mike Mignola. He really enjoys Mignola's art, especially the bold use of black. However, he really enjoys this cover because it reminds him of a time when he first came to the UK and he was able to read this entire series as it came out. Whereas back in Peru finding complete series of comics was rare.

The most meaningful comic that Gustaffo's read is Marco Mono by Carlos Trillo and Enrique Breccia. This is because his father brought back this comic from Argentina, that blew his mind.

In Gustaffo's opinion the most underrated comic is Slang Pictorial by Nick Prolix. Gustaffo thinks that Nick has done an outstanding job of building such a rich world that depicts London in the 60s, everyone should be reading this comic.

Lastly, Gustaffo thinks that the best comic of all time for him is Hellboy by Mike Mignola. He loves the art, the story and actually met Mike Mignola once at Thought Bubble, and he was a really nice guy.

If you'd like to listen to this episode of Comics For The Apocalypse or any of our other episodes with the likes of Heather Antos from Valiant Comics or PJ Holden of Judge Dredd fame then please visit **www.SoundCloud.com/ComicsApocalypse** or simply search Comics. If you're on Twitter follow Samuel George London at **www.twitter.com/SamuelGLondon**

For The Apocalypse in your podcast app.

"The scariest comic that Gustaffo has read is **House of Sweets** by Fraser Campbell, Iain Laurie, David B. Cooper & Colin Bell"

COMIC SCENE

Your Complete Guide to Comics

SUBSCRIBE TO THE FASTEST GROWING MAGAZINE ABOUT COMICS IN THE UK & IRELAND

Order previous issues of ComicScene and subscribe at www.getmycomics.com/ComicScene

AND BUY AND SUBSCRIBE TO THE LATEST AMERICAN, BRITISH & INDEPENDENT COMICS

GETMYCOMICS.COM

ONLY £4.99 AN ISSUE subscription price

SAVE & SUBSCRIBE www.getmycomics.com/ComicScene

4 ISSUES **£19.92** | 8 ISSUES **£39.92** | 8 ISSUES DIGITAL **£24**

GETMYCOMICS.COM

THE ULTIMATE COMIC SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE.

FEATURING ALL YOUR FAVOURITE US AND UK TITLES AND BRINGING YOU EXCITING NEW INDEPENDENT CREATORS.

HERD #1
WRITER: GEOFF RICHARDS
ART: PETER HABJAN

HOMO-VAMPYRUS WERE THE MOST DEADLY HUMANS EVER TO EVOLVE. STRONGER AND FASTER THAN THEIR HOMINID COUSINS, THEY QUICKLY BECAME THE DOMINANT SPECIES AMONGST THE GREAT APES. HERD TELLS THE STORY OF THIS TIME

£4.99 BI-MONTHLY FROM FLOATING ROCK COMICS

KORA: THE COMPLETE ADVENTURES.
CHRIS GEARY

AFTER WAKING UP ON AN UNNAMED PLANET, ALL KORA WANTS IS TO GET BACK HOME.
BUT SOMETIMES LIFE DOESN'T QUITE WORK OUT HOW YOU WANT...

TO THE DEATH #6

ISSUE 6 OF THE SEARING 10 PART PRESTIGE FORMAT MAXI-SERIES FROM SIMON FURMAN AND GEOFF SENIOR. 48 PAGES, £4.99 MONTHLY, BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE.

TECHNOFREAK #3
JOHN CHARLES, BARRY MAY,
TOM NEWEL.

HAS LORETTA BEEN KIDNAPPED YET AGAIN? CAN JON SHERLOK SURVIVE THE VENGEANCE OF SAKAMOTO'S SISTER? WHAT IF A MAJOR TECHNOFREAK CHARACTER DIES? THIS ONE'S GOT IT ALL..!!

SUNDAY LUNCH COMICS.

"GREAT SERVICE AND FANTASTIC CUSTOMER SERVICE! COULDN'T RECOMMEND THESE GUYS ENOUGH"
LUKE S.

SPOOKIDS #1 BY MARC JACKSON
WEIRDO COMICS

THREE KIDS, ONE 'BRAIN-HAT' AND A TRIP TO THE WOODS IN THE NIGHT, THE SPOOKIDS EMBARK ON A CREEPY CAPER OF THE FAR-OUT KIND!

£5.00 UK, $7.00 US
U.S. SIZE, FULL COLOUR 24 PAGES

10% DISCOUNT ON PRE-ORDERS.

- CROSSOVER INDENTIFICATION AND SUBSCRIPTION.
- VARIANTS - ALWAYS GET THE COVERS YOU WANT.
- RECOMMENDATION ENGINE - ADVANCED SUGGESTIONS

10% DISCOUNT ON PRE-ORDERS WHEN YOU BUY MORE THAN 5 TITLES A MONTH.

FREE SHIPPING ON 10 OR MORE BOOKS - SENT BAGGED AND BOARDED IN SECURE PACKAGING.

VISIT HTTPS://GETMYCOMICS.COM

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SUBSCRIPTIONS

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK - FACEBOOK.COM/GETMYCOMICS FOLLOW US ON TWITTER - @GETMYCOMICS
HTTPS://GETMYCOMICS.COM/MAIN/TERMS